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Feudal And Modern Japan Vol. I.

Arthur May Knapp

FEUDAL AND MODERN JAPAN

BY
ARTHUR MAY KNAPP

VOL. I.

Second Edition

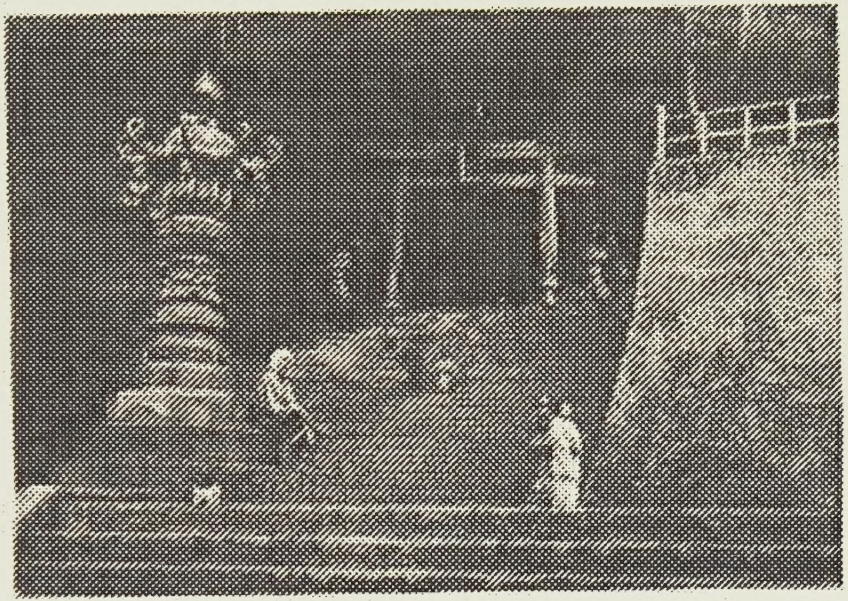
1897

TO

FUKUZAWA YUKICHI

IN GRATEFUL RECOGNITION

OF HOSPITALITY.



TEMPLE ENTRANCE.

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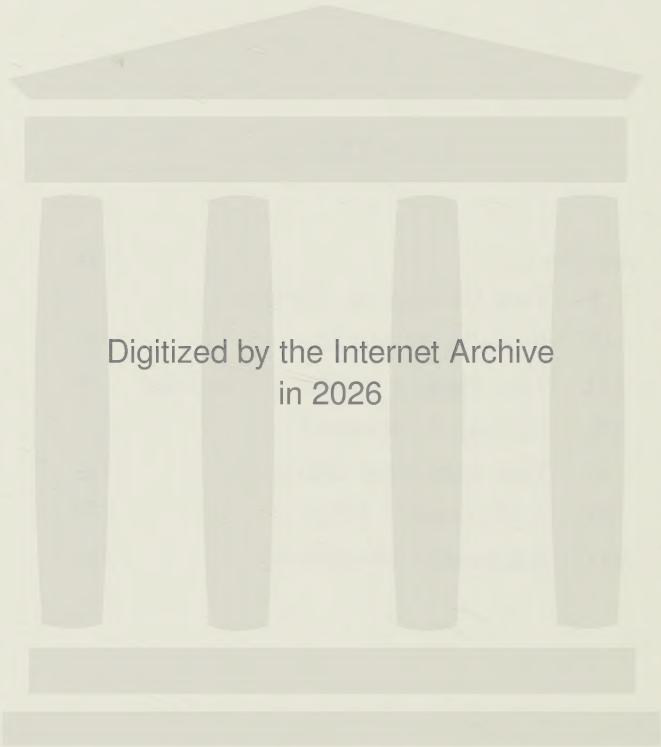
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PREFACE.

SINCE her war with China brought Japan into such prominence, kindling anew the curiosity which her dramatic advent into the modern world had awakened, more than enough has been written in the way of describing the features of the land and the characteristics of the people. The unique facts have been amply exploited. Not so the factors. They remain veiled in an obscurity almost as deep as that which enshrouded the nation during the long period of her seclusion. To the foreigner, absorbed in watching the extraordinary transformation scene since enacted, and even to the Japanese themselves, intent of late only upon utilizing what Western life had to offer them, the two and a half centuries during which peculiar and potent forces were at work

shaping the national disposition and destiny have practically become a blank. While we have been marvelling at the virile qualities displayed by a people who for centuries have dwelt in profound peace, and at the aptitude for progress exhibited by a nation always credited with being the very type of Oriental conservatism, very little attention has been given to any inquiry into the causes which have ultimated in such startling results, — causes which must be sought mainly in conditions prevailing during the centuries when Japan was shut out from the world.

An endeavor to supply, in some measure, this lack was the main motive for the writing of these volumes.

Apart from the intrinsic attractions of the subject, the way in which my attention was drawn to it during my residence in Japan may be of some interest. Among those whose intimate friendship I there enjoyed, was the one man among the foreigners who seemed to realize how

swiftly the idyllic institutions of old Japan were passing away, and how irretrievable would be the loss to history were not some record of them preserved. With all the advantages which his profession as a physician gave him during his thirty years' residence, together with his knowledge of the language and his unique power of winning his way into the hearts of all ranks and classes, Dr. Simmons had succeeded in collecting a vast mass of notes and memoranda concerning Japanese life and local institutions under the Tokugawa, or modern feudal *régime*. In his failing years his one absorbing and pathetic regret was that these notes must be left in the chaotic state to which his acknowledged lack of power of systematization had apparently doomed them. It was, however, but a few months after his death that I had the good fortune to put them into the hands of Professor Wigmore, then of the Keiogijiku, and now of the Chicago University, who has more than

fulfilled the good doctor's most ardent hopes. In the Transactions of the Asiatic Society Professor Wigmore has not only set forth with consummate skill the results of Dr. Simmons' researches, but also, stimulated to indefatigable research of his own along similar lines, he has gathered, under the head of "Materials for the Study of Private Law in Old Japan," an even greater mass of information concerning the inner history of the empire during the Feudal Period.

The value of all this material, now for the first time made accessible to foreign readers, is greatly enhanced by the fact that the feudal system of Japan attained its highest development, not as in Europe amid constant wars and fightings, but during long centuries of peace, in which by the cultivation of the arts of refinement, and under a wise system of local self-government, the chivalric spirit was kept thoroughly alive.

To the unique features of Japanese

history must therefore be added the preservation of the forceful elements of the national life through influences to such end unknown in the annals of any other people in the world. It is to the elucidation of these influences that the chapters on Feudal Life are mainly devoted.

FEUDAL AND MODERN JAPAN.

CHAPTER I.

THE CRUSOE OF NATIONS.

OF the power and singularity of the fascination which Japan exerts over the Western mind there can be no question. *Blasé* tourists, who have exhausted all the sensations of modern travel, speak of it as the one country in the world which does not disappoint; and no one who has left it after a few years' residence can ever wholly overcome his longing to return to the Island Paradise. It is unquestionably the unique nation of the globe, — the land of dream and enchantment, the land which could hardly differ more from our own were it located on another planet, its people not of this world.

While of course the secret of this fascination defies complete analysis, it may yet be attributed in large measure to the long isolation from the world of a people in a high state of civilization. Japan is the Robinson Crusoe of nations; and just as the lone sailor cast upon a desert isle is the hero of our childhood, just as we are fascinated by the story of his loneliness and of his single-handed triumphs, so the story of the Island Nation appeals to us by its unique experience of isolation. Japan, like Crusoe, is to us a suggestion of what one can do alone; and Japan more than Crusoe appeals to us, because her story, marvellous as it is, is no more marvellous than true. Robinson, according to all the laws of human nature, should have lapsed into savagery; and it was only fiction which saved him from that fate by making him in himself a community of trained abilities, and furnishing him with a magazine of human powers in the contents of his wrecked ship.

Of a high order, indeed, then, must have been the civilization already attained by Japan when she shut out the world from

her shores, and, close sealed for two and a half centuries, instead of relapsing into barbarism, spent the time of her seclusion in exquisitely refining her nature and her arts. And of extraordinary strength, it may be added, must have been the virile virtues of the people, surviving, as they have, in full force after so long a period of profound peace. In a word, the history of Japan, whenever it has not been a fascinating puzzle, has been a source of astonishment to the rest of the world. The amazement with which the Western peoples are to-day regarding her achievements in modern warfare is only the last of a series of surprises with which Japan has startled the nations.

At the outset it has been an astonishment to students of race problems to find there in the far Orient, where one might expect to see Oriental characteristics predominate, or to become intensified, a people of whom it would be difficult to say whether they more resemble the ancient Greeks or the North American Indians. So close is the resemblance to the latter that various arguments from language, physiognomy, superstitions,

and customs strengthen, if they do not confirm, the theory that the great Kuro Shiwo, or Gulf stream of the Pacific, sweeping many a hapless junk from the Japanese shores, has carried to our Pacific coast numerous accessions to our Indian tribes, if not their actual progenitors.

But what ship originally cast this Crusoe of nations on the shores of the far Pacific isles, furnishing her people of every class and condition with a wealth of artistic perception such as only ancient Greece possessed, is one of the most puzzling problems that ever perplexed the brain of the ethnologist. Differing from the Chinese almost as much as does the American from the Turk, well-nigh the only indication of Mongol origin is the obliqueness of the eyelids, which merely suggests an origin in high latitudes, where Nature protects the eyes of animals in the same way. From Korea, which might be called a dead Greece, doubtless came the largest infusion of blood; while the Malay, drifting up from the south on the great sea current, may have contributed his fiery spirit to the early invading tribes which from the west and south grad-

ually drove the Ainos, or aborigines, into the north, where their remnants now await, as stolidly as do our Indian tribes on the Western plains, their inevitable extinction. But whatever the combination of race elements may have been, the result is an astonishment. For though no drop of Aryan blood may be traced in their veins, yet a notably Aryan capacity for progress, which not even three centuries of forced conservatism could extinguish, and an Aryan spirit of refinement, kept alive while that of Greece utterly perished, have made the Japanese to-day, though not in blood, yet in all practical and essential regards, the Indo-Europeans of the far East. The very fact that the Japanese are to-day called variously the Yankees, the Englishmen, and the Frenchmen of the East is an unwitting recognition of the possession of distinctively Aryan qualities, though no trace of Aryan influence in the original race elements can be detected. If this be true, — if the Japanese are Aryans to all intents and purposes, then the recent war in the Orient, looked at in the light of the remarkable racial elements in the Japanese character,

was not a mere passing quarrel between two Eastern powers; it was practically the dash against the hither shores of Asia of the tremendous wave of progress which, beginning ages ago in the highlands of Northern India, has swept westward and ever westward around the globe. Successively lifting upon its crest the empires of Persia, Greece, and Rome, with the Cavaliers and Pilgrims it crossed the stormy Atlantic, and raised up the new empire of the West. Spreading over the expanse of this continent, it reached the shores of the Pacific; and again forty years ago crossing the vast ocean, it aroused from its slumber of centuries a people marvellously well fitted to be the pioneers of the new civilization for the millions of Asia.

Japan's movement upon China is another pulse-beat of the world's regenerating life. It is the unconscious taking up by a brave, chivalrous people of the part assigned to it by Providence, pressing on toward

> "The one far-off, divine event
> Toward which the whole creation moves."

Hardly less surprising than the ethnic

elements in the Japanese character are the contents of their mythology.

The "Kojiki," or "Records of Ancient Matters," a collection of traditions gathered twelve hundred years ago, opens with an account of creation extraordinarily like that suggested by the nebular hypothesis, the description of genesis reading, "When the earth, young and like unto floating oil, drifted about Medusa-like." From such a beginning we are hardly surprised to find spontaneous generation next suggested in the production of two august deities, "born from a thing that sprouted up like a reed-shoot." As the procession of life continues, and we see given to later births such names as the "Luxuriant-Integrating-Master Deity," the "Germ-Integrating Deity," and the "Life-Integrating Deity," and when we find that the "Deity Mud-Earth-Lord" preceded the "Deity Perfect-Exterior," the proof of the pre-existence of Herbert Spencer becomes startlingly complete. In his former state, however, he was the most ungallant of men; for, while the masculine nature is represented as the highest product of evolution, the feminine is the supreme

illustration of degeneration, the "Deity Mud-Earth-Lady" being followed by the "Deity Oh-Awful-Lady." We are now, however, somewhat prepared for the extraordinary Adam and Eve who appear upon the scene. After the "Deity Perfect-Exterior" and the "Deity Oh-Awful-Lady," come "Izanagi" and "Izanami," or the "Male-who-Invites" and the "Female-who-Invites." Instead of being placed in Paradise, and then ejected therefrom, Paradise itself is made and formed by them. The beginning of Japan is thus described: "Hereupon all the heavenly deities commanded His Augustness, the Male-who-Invites, and Her Augustness, the Female-who-Invites, ordering them to 'make, consolidate, and give birth to this drifting land.' Granting to them a heavenly jewelled spear, they thus deigned to charge them. So the two, standing upon the Bridge of Heaven, pushed down the jewelled spear, and stirred with it. Whereupon, when they stirred the brine till it went curdle-curdle, and drew the spear up, the brine that dripped down from the end of the spear was piled up and became an island." This was the beginning of the birth of the archipelago of Japan.

Paradise having been thus created by this surprising pair, there is no hint of their being deprived of it through the consciousness of sin. Like their modern descendants, there is in them no such consciousness in aught that appertains to the nature or to the necessities of existence. Life in their Paradise is passed under no divine supervision or warnings, and there is no fall. There is, however, a very charming family quarrel, in which Adam, instead of meanly laying the blame on Eve, calmly emphasizes his supremacy over her. It happened on their wedding tour. Starting to go round the island, one travelling east and the other west, Izanami, on meeting her spouse, exclaimed, "How lovely to meet a handsome male!" Incensed at her having spoken first, he insisted upon another tour, and on the second meeting had indeed the first word, "How lovely to meet a handsome female!" but yielded to her the privilege she has since enjoyed of having the last. Thus the serpent entered the Japanese Paradise.

The next surprise that greets us in the story of the progenitors of the Japanese is

the distinctly Grecian character of the scene with which it closes, the picture being a replica of Orpheus's descent into hell, but painted with a force and vividness which little in Aryan mythology can surpass. In giving birth to the Fire God, Eve at length "divinely retired,"—that is, died. "Thereupon His Augustness followed after her to the land of Hades. So when from the palace she raised the door and came out to meet him, His Augustness said, 'The lands that I and thou made are not yet finished making; so come back.' And then Her Augustness answered, 'Lamentable indeed that thou comest not sooner. I have eaten of the furnace of Hades. Nevertheless I wish to return. I will discuss it with the deities of Hades.' Having thus spoken, she went back inside the palace; and as she tarried there very long, he could not wait. So, having taken one of the end teeth of the multitudinous comb stuck in the august left bunch of his hair, he lit a light, and went in and looked. Maggots were swarming; she was rotting; and in her head dwelt the Great Thunder, and in her breast dwelt the Fire Thunder, in her

body the Black Thunder and the Cleaving Thunder, in her left hand the Young Thunder, in her right hand the Earth Thunder, in her left foot the Rumbling Thunder, in her right foot the Couchant Thunder, — altogether eight thunder deities had been born and dwelt there. Hereupon His Augustness, the Male-who-Invites, overawed at the sight, fled back. Whereupon Her Augustness, the Female-who-Invites, said, 'Thou hast put me to shame,' and at once sent the Ugly Female of Hades to pursue him."

The Japanese Cain and Abel, the Princes Fire Shine and Fire Subside, had their quarrel while fishing. It happened in this wise: "His Augustness, Fire Shine, was a prince who got his luck on the sea, and caught things broad of fin and narrow of fin. His Augustness, Fire Subside, was a prince who got his luck on the mountains, and caught things rough of hair and things soft of hair." Proposing an exchange of luck, the hunter not only did not get a single bite, but lost the hook borrowed of his brother. Offering a thousand hooks in compensation, the latter insisted upon hav-

ing only the lost one. Whereupon there follows a delightful story, according to which the younger brother, going in search of the hook, visits the palace of the Sea Deity, marries his charming daughter, and for three years forgets the fish-hook, which the Sea Deity at last finds for him. He sends him back with it, together with talismans in the shape of a tide-ebbing and tide-flowing jewel, with the first of which he could overwhelm with a flood his brother and all his fields. "When the latter was about to attack him, he put forth the tide-flowing jewel to drown him; but on his expressing grief, he put forth the tide-ebbing jewel to save him. When he had thus been harassed, he bowed his head, saying, 'I henceforward will be Thine Augustness's guard by day and night, and respectfully serve thee." The supremacy thus established lasts to this day, inasmuch as the son of Fire Subside and the Sea Deity's daughter (Her Augustness, Luxuriant Jewel-Princess) was His Augustness, Heavens-Sun-Height-Prince-Wave-Limit-Brave-Cormorant-Thatch-Meeting-Incompletely, the grandfather of Jimmu Tenno.

the first emperor of Japan, the founder of the present imperial dynasty.

Even more prolific of surprises than these mythological records are the annals of Japanese authentic history, which begins in the fifth century of our era.

A little more than three hundred years ago the city of Rome was the scene of perhaps the strangest sight which even her streets, trodden by pilgrims from all the corners of the earth, have ever witnessed. Escorted by the cavalry and Swiss guard, accompanied by the foreign embassies, all the Roman princes and nobility, with the officials of the cardinals and of the Vatican, a company of Japanese ambassadors, themselves of princely birth, were conducted into the presence of the chief pontiff. The vast crowds thronging the street and filling the windows looked on in almost breathless silence as the strange visitors in their splendidly embroidered robes, and wearing in their girdles two swords, the symbols of Japanese gentility, passed onward to the Hall of Audience. Reaching the bridge of St. Angelo, the guns of the Castle joined with those of the Vatican in welcoming the

ambassadors. Ushered into the presence of the pontiff, the Japanese approached the papal throne with their credentials. Prostrating themselves at the Pope's feet, they declared that they "had come from the extremities of the East to acknowledge in the presence of the Pope the vicar of Jesus Christ, and to render obedience to him in the name of the princes of whom they were the envoys."

The appearance of the young men, described by the chronicler as "modest and amiable, yet with a conscious sentiment of nobility," together with the extraordinary character of their message, "drew tears and sobs from the greater part of the audience. The Pope himself, greatly agitated, hastened to raise them up and kissed their foreheads."

The reading of the letters was followed by a discourse by Father Gonzales, in which occurs a passage which so accurately describes the Japanese character to-day, and so vividly depicts the impression they were then making upon the Western world, that it becomes well worth quoting in view of the wonder with which we are now

regarding the achievements of the Island Nation: —

"Nature has separated Japan from our country by such an extent of land and sea that before the present age there were very few persons who had any knowledge of it, and even now there are those who find it difficult to believe the accounts of it which we give. It is certain nevertheless, most Holy Father, that there are several Japanese islands of vast extent, and in these islands numerous fine cities, the inhabitants of which have a keen intelligence, noble and courageous hearts, obliging dispositions, politeness of manners, and inclinations disposed toward that which is good. Those who have known them have decidedly preferred them to all the other peoples of Asia, and it is only their lack of the true religion which prevents them from competing with the nations of Europe.

"For some years past this religion has been preached to them by apostolical missionaries. Its commencements were small, but God having given it His blessing it took root in the hearts of the nobles, and of late has been received by the greatest lords,

princes, and kings of Japan. This, most Holy Father, ought to console you for many reasons; but principally because, laboring as you do with indefatigable zeal to re-establish a religion shaken and almost destroyed by the new heresies here in Europe, you see it take root and make great progress in the most distant country in the world. What satisfaction to see the most generous and valiant kings of the East, conquered by the arms of the faith, submitting themselves to the empire of Jesus Christ, and as they cannot, from their avocations, come in person to take the oath of obedience and fidelity to the holy see, acquitting themselves of this duty by ambassadors so nearly related to them and whom they so tenderly love! O immortal God! What a stroke of thine arm! What an effect of Thy grace! In places so distant from the holy see, as soon as the faith shed there the first rays of truth, men of temperaments quite different from ours, kings illustrious by their nobility, redoubtable for their power, conquerors and warriors signalized by their victories, acknowledge the greatness and dignity of the Roman

Church, and hold it a great honor to kiss the feet of the Church's head by the lips of persons infinitely dear to them."

The date of this interesting scene and discourse was 1584.* The Christian faith, so splendidly tolerant and hospitable were these refined islanders, then numbered its converts by hundreds of thousands, and the noblest of the leaders had yielded to the sway. But in a little more than three decades, in a fury of persecution scarcely matched even by the Spanish Inquisition, every vestige of the Western religion was swept from the land, its symbols were held up to popular abhorrence, to prevent its

* The extraordinary impress made upon the Roman Church by this event is indicated by the fact that of the thirty-eight persons admitted to sainthood by Rome during the present century prior to 1863, no less than twenty-six were Japanese; and the occasion of their canonization on the 8th of June, 1862, was made the most magnificent function ever celebrated in the Holy City. There were present at the solemnity forty-three cardinals, five patriarchs, fifty-two archbishops, one hundred and eighty-six bishops, — in all two hundred and sixty-seven of the highest dignitaries of the church, who joined in doing honor, not to those who might have been selected from the saintly servants of the church in the Western world, but to the obscure, half-mythical martyrs of far-off Japan.

re-entrance the ports of the empire were close sealed, and for two hundred and fifty years the Japanese, a people in whose hearts hospitality and kindliness were the crowning virtues, became almost wholly dead to the world, cut off from every opportunity of exercising their native bent and disposition.

Precisely what caused the sudden change, the fresh surprise with which Japan then startled the world, will probably never be ascertained; but it is fair to presume, from what is known of the lust of dominion which then characterized Jesuit movements, that the spirit of church aggrandizement was carried so far as to seem a practical invasion of the land, — a land whose pride it had been never to permit the foot of an invader to press its soil. The Japanese virtue of hospitality, generous as it was, proved no match for the Japanese passion of patriotism. The crowning virtue went down before the over-mastering fury of the supreme passion. The Japanese, the kindliest of our race, were severed from race companionship, and the name of the most hospitable people on our globe became a synonym for arrogance and exclusiveness.

TENJINTOGE AND LAKE HARUNA.

How forty years ago the unnatural spell was broken, how the kindliness of the Japanese reasserted itself after all the centuries of stern repression, how generously the old-time hospitality was lavished, with what eager interest the nation awoke to the wonders of Western civilization, and with what noble earnestness its youth applied themselves to the study of what the new life had opened to them, all are familiar. The story of the long isolation which made Japan the fascinating mystery of our childhood is equalled only by the story of the new birth which has made her the marvel of modern history.

And now again, after a succession of tales of fascinated travellers who have visited the islands of the lone nation, and opened to us the marvels of its delicate art and the refinements of its manners, the attention of the Western world is to-day fixed with vast wonderment upon the new aspect which Japan presents in the exhibition of those masterful qualities which have heretofore been deemed the exclusive possession of the Occident, or which during its long Crusoe life the nation might well be supposed to

have lost. The people whom we had learned to love for their kindliness and to admire for their refined taste and artistic genius, whom we had credited with pre-eminence only in these regards, have been suddenly transformed into a martial nation. After three centuries of almost unbroken peace, there is shown among them such an aptitude for war, such a genius for military organization, and such an eagerness for the fray, that the words of Father Gonzales just now quoted might as aptly be used again, for even now "there are those who find it difficult to believe the accounts of it which we give." With magnificent dash, pluck, energy, and strategic skill the Island Nation has flung itself against the huge bulk of the colossus of the East, winning an unbroken series of victories on land and sea, unparalleled in the annals of modern warfare.

To one acquainted with the history of the land and with the character and ambitions of its people, however, these developments, marvellous as they may seem, occasion little or no astonishment. Heretofore credited only with the milder virtues, with

artistic tastes, and with refined manners, Japan's impatience at this Western estimate of her character has been kept in check only by her inborn politeness. Beneath that, her spirit has rankled bitterly at the effusive compliments bestowed upon her by fascinated tourists. Only on rare occasions — such, for example, as that of Sir Edwin Arnold's speech at the welcome banquet given him on his arrival, when he lauded the nation for the possession of every virtue under heaven except the virile ones — has a storm of protest arisen against this popular Western misconception of the true genius of the Japanese people. And yet, inveterate as the misconception is, perhaps it is not to be greatly wondered at. With nine out of ten Occidentals, untaught to study geography with reference to scale, and ignorant of the fact that Yokohama is nearly as far from Hong Kong as is Boston from Liverpool, there is a persistent confounding of the Japanese with the Chinese character, as untrue as it is intensely galling to the former nation. While, as I have already said, there is well-nigh as great a difference between the two peoples as between

ourselves and the Turks, it is rare, even in the most intelligent of our communities, to find this difference recognized, or credit given to the Japanese for the possession of distinctive national virtues differentiating them from the mild and harmless Celestials. On my return to Boston after a residence of two years in Japan, I was met by three friends in quick succession with these greetings: "Do I not perceive the odor of sandal-wood about you?" "Of course you have contracted the opium habit?" "Where is your pig-tail?" Here were references to three things almost entirely unknown in Japan, and yet credited to its people, through the persistency with which they are popularly classed with their far-away neighbors.

The prevailing misapprehension of the dominant spirit of the islanders is also largely owing to the fact that their history, so long a sealed book to the Occidental world, has not yet become sufficiently familiar to make its legitimate impress upon the Western mind. When it is read as it should be, it will be recognized as a distinct contribution to the world's annals, and as

furnishing a record of the development of one of the loftiest human qualities. In this regard Japan will take her place with the three ancient nations of the earth who have stood for something, and in whose life a virtue has become so prominent as to associate its name indissolubly with that of the nation. Just as Judea stands for the development of religion, Greece for the perfection of Art, and Rome for the idea of Law, so Japan has become a special contributor to the sum of the world's treasures. Although indeed rivalling ancient Greece in the artistic qualities and in the passionate sense of beauty pervading even her humblest, with Japan art is after all merely an aptitude and delight. Her love for it, fervent as it is, is not the underlying sentiment. Loyalty is the great national enthusiasm, and the part that the nation is to play in the history of the world is that it is to be the conspicuous teacher and examplar of the power of that virtue.

We Americans thought we had learned during the awful battle-storm of our Civil War the meaning of the word "patriotism." We felt as never before the thrill of the

Nation's soul. We became devoted lovers of the flag because there was awakened within us the consciousness of the mighty things for which it stood. And this when our country was not a century old, its annals meagre, its territory undeveloped and largely unknown, and its people a motley of nations and races. Now, think of a nation homogeneous to a degree, living under a single dynasty dating back twenty-five hundred years, and during all those years having the sentiment of loyalty taught and cherished till it became a passion and a worship; think of the national pride engendered by the fact that not once in all those many centuries has the foot of an invader been suffered to press the soil; think of national annals, over which every child has pored, full of deeds of dauntless chivalry and self-sacrificing devotion; think of a country so strangely beautiful that Nature itself becomes an object of worship, and a shrine marks every spot where the eye can catch a fresh glimpse of its loveliness; then think of such a people shut up in such a land for nearly three centuries, living in profound

peace, and, instead of degenerating, cultivating the arts that make for gentleness and for mutual kindliness, — and one may form some faint conception of the patriotic passion with which their hearts throb when a crucial experience comes to them, calling for the exercise of this the supreme virtue of loyalty. Although the world wonders, no student of Japanese history, especially of the period preceding the Great Peace, as they call the time of their seclusion, can be surprised to see to-day this virile virtue more strikingly illustrated than at any previous period of modern history. The chivalry of the race, the lofty spirit known in poetry and romance as "Yamato damashii," "the soul of Japan," is brought into a bold relief that vividly recalls the knightly legends of the past. Not even two hundred and fifty years of seclusion and peace have availed in the least to check the ardor of the great national enthusiasm.

A correspondent of the New York Tribune writing from Japan at the opening of the late war says: "Such unanimity of feeling, such faith in the common cause, such readiness to sacrifice all if need be for

the glory of the empire, have seldom been paralleled in any land. Americans who witnessed the uprising of the North thirty years ago know how the fervor of an enthusiastic nation reveals itself; but even that memorable example falls behind the present demonstration in Japan, for then there were doubts and dissensions which jarred against the prevailing sentiment, while here not one discordant note is heard. The whole populace think and act as one man. Their confidence in the result is without the slightest drawback. The sole apprehension felt by any citizen is that he may not be accorded the privilege of contributing in some manner to the great end." It is safe to say that there is not a man, woman, or child in Japan having knowledge of the struggle who has not directly and voluntarily contributed to its maintenance. Out of her extraordinary poverty, without recourse to a foreign loan, the enormous expense of a modern war, enhanced by the necessity of transporting huge armies to the distant continent, has been defrayed by the nation from home resources. And for those actually engaged in the conflict, the eagerness,

the passionate self-devotion, with which they have thrown themselves into the fray recall the terrible spirit of the feudal days, and show that the virile virtues of those days have not in the least succumbed to the enervating influences of the Long Peace. Instances are numerous of men killing themselves because not needed by the government. A soldier at Söul detailed to escort Minister Otori back to Japan slew himself because he could not accompany his comrades to the field. Another, prevented by illness from embarking with his regiment, rose from his sick-bed, and, before a portrait of the Emperor, died by his own sword. Still another, for the same cause compelled to halt and let his men storm a fort without him, on his discharge from the hospital went at once to the spot where he had fallen, and killed himself to wipe out the fancied disgrace. This strong undercurrent of loyalty—"a quality," says Hearn, "which Japan possesses in a degree without existing modern parallel, in a degree that so trite a word as patriotism is utterly powerless to represent," — is the key to any proper understanding or appreciation of Japanese history.

Even the sources of that history in the mythological accounts of the "Kojiki" are held sacred and inviolate, not at all from religious, but solely from patriotic motives. Among the educated, who reject all the legends of the gods as puerile superstitions, the equally mythical accounts of the early emperors are accepted without hesitation. Religious faith may suffer from the discrediting of the ancient records, but no shadow of doubt must be thrown on the credentials of the most ancient dynasty in the world, no whisper be raised to detract from the reverence due to its reigning representative. Nor is the stifling of the spirit of scepticism in this regard the result of fear, or the outcome of mere political expediency; it is simply an evidence of the patriotic passion which fills the nation's soul. No word of protest, either from the intelligent or from the humblest, was raised when, a few years since, the editor of one of the Tokyo journals was imprisoned for speaking disrespectfully of the mythical emperor, Jimmu Tenno, the founder of the dynasty twenty-five hundred years ago. The offence was felt to be an insult to the entire nation.

SACRED BRIDGE NIKKO

Out of this conviction of the sacredness of the national life comes that reverence for the living emperor, utterly unlike any emotion that the Western heart can know, which dominates the life and thought of every Japanese: "Something," says Hearn, "for which the word 'loyalty' were an utterly dead rendering; something akin rather to that which we call mystical exaltation, — a sense of uttermost devotion to the Tenshi Sama, the 'Son of Heaven.'" It is doubtful whether man, woman, or child can be found in Japan to-day who will say aught against him. When a rumor recently went abroad that he was to proceed in person to take command of the armies in China, a shudder of apprehension went through the entire nation at the bare thought of exposing his sacred person to the dangers of voyage and field. One of the rare cases of intolerance shown to missionaries in Japan was occasioned by a hope publicly expressed by one of them that the Mikado might be converted to Christianity. The foreign propagandist was privileged to aim at any of the highest in the government, but not at the heart of the nation; and the

over-zealous brother was forced to flee the town. The simple announcement that the emperor was sorrowing because of the assault upon the Czarewitz at Otsu by a Japanese fanatic led a young girl, the daughter of a samurai, to slay herself, after writing a letter to the government praying that "the Tenshi Sama be asked to cease from sorrowing, seeing that a young life, however unworthy, was given in voluntary expiation for the wrong."

"Ask a class of Japanese students," says Hearn, "to tell their dearest wishes, and, if they have confidence in the questioner, perhaps nine out of ten will answer, 'To die for His Majesty, our emperor.' And the wish soars from the heart pure as any wish for martyrdom ever born. Such ecstatic loyalty is a part of the national life; it is in the blood, — inherent as the impulse of the ant to perish for its little republic, unconscious as the loyalty of bees to their queen."

That these examples of devotion are inspired purely by patriotic, not by personal, feeling is evident from the fact that there has been little or nothing in the personal

character of most of the emperors themselves to arouse enthusiasm. While the nation has remained extraordinarily virile through all the enervating influences of the Long Peace, the nominal rulers have been sunk into the lowest depths of effeminacy. For nearly a thousand years the reins of power have been held successively by ambitious and forceful nobles, — the Fujiwara, the Taira, the Minamoto, the Ashikaga, the Hōjō, and the Tokugawa, — whose interest it has been to make the emperor a nonentity, or so to regulate the succession that the throne might always be held either by a child, an imbecile, or a voluptuary. But there has been no such usurpation of power that has not been forced to take cognizance of the popular devotion to the emperor, and by it to shape its policy. No feudal lord, however ambitious or masterful, has ever been able for a moment to reign in his own name, or to establish a rival dynasty. Every act and edict must seem to emanate from the emperor himself, who, kept in sacred seclusion, has ever been in the people's thought the source of all authority. In this fact we find the simple explanation of the accounts

given by early travellers of the spiritual and temporal emperors reigning concurrently, and also of the dual government of Mikado and Shogun, so puzzling to the Western student at the time of the opening of the country by Commodore Perry. That so many virile qualities should mark the character of the present emperor, after the deteriorating influences to which for a thousand years the majority of his ancestors had been purposely subjected, is not the least of the strange features of the nation's history. It is certainly an indication of the remarkable recuperative or resistant strength of the Japanese nature in its struggle against the enervating tendencies of her peculiar experience and her long seclusion. Indeed, the chief result of the age-long crime committed against the nation in the persons of its emperors seems to have been avenged upon its perpetrators. It is a curious and significant fact that the effeminacy to which the imperial line was so long doomed by the chief feudal lords of the empire has been the ultimate fate of well-nigh the whole class of daimio, who alone of the people of the realm are to-day

lacking in virile energy. By a sort of poetic justice, precisely the same policy adopted by the shoguns, or chief vassals, in regard to the emperor was in turn used against many a daimio by his chief retainers, until the name of daimio was at last a synonym for degeneracy, and the nobles became the merest puppets in the hands of their clansmen.* It has been ever in these clansmen, the knightly chivalry, the ever

* A pamphlet, entitled "Han Ron" ("The Clans"), published soon after the restoration of the emperor in 1868, contains, as quoted by Adams in his "History of Japan," the following description of the condition into which the Japanese nobility had at that time fallen: —

"The great majority of the feudal lords are generally persons who have been born and nurtured in the seclusion of the women's apartments; who have been cherished as tenderly as if they were delicate ornaments of jewelry or pearls; who even when they have grown up to man's estate still exhibit all the traits of childhood. Having never mastered the details of business, they feel no responsibility in the affairs of state. With their bodies clad in gorgeous apparel, they feel not the winter's blast, and know not that men pine of starvation and cold. With the beauty of their wives and concubines arrayed before them, and the sounds of music and revelry ringing in their ears, they leave no desire of the heart ungratified."

loyal and brave samurai, that the national passion of patriotism has been kept alive and even intensified by the Crusoe life of the people.

It was through these influences that what was perhaps the most knightly act of devotion to country and king the world has ever seen made Japan the mighty empire she is to-day. Among all the surprises she has given to the nations, none exceeds in dramatic power or suggestiveness the relinquishment of all feudal claims and the restoration of the entire empire to the imperial rule by those whose chief thought before had been that of loyalty to their clan. The memorial by which the great clans of Satsuma, Choshiu, Tosa, and Hizen offered up the lists of their possessions to the emperor, on March 5, 1869, is one of the most remarkable documents to be found in the records of any people: —

"Since the heavenly ancestors established the foundations of the country, the imperial line has not failed for ten thousand ages. The heaven and earth [that is, Japan] are the emperor's. There is no man who is not his retainer. . . . In ancient time the imperial

wisdom ruled all, and there was prosperity under heaven. In the Middle Ages the ropes of the net were relaxed, so that men, toying with the Great Strength and striving for power, crowded upon the emperor, and stole his land. . . . Thus it was that the emperor wore an empty and vain rank, and, the order of things being reversed, looked up to the bakufu [the shogun's government] as the dispenser of joy and sorrow. . . . During this time the bakufu borrowed the name and authority of the emperor, and used the imperial name as a blind. Now the great government has been newly restored, and the emperor himself undertakes the direction of affairs. This is indeed a rare and mighty event. We have the name of an imperial government; we must also have the fact. Our first duty is to illustrate our faithfulness and to prove our loyalty. . . . The place where we live is the emperor's land, and the food we eat is grown by the emperor's men. How can we make it our own? We now reverently offer up the list of our possessions and men. Let the imperial orders be issued for the altering and remodelling

the territories of the various clans. . . . Let the civil and penal codes and military laws all proceed from the emperor. Let all the affairs of the empire, great and small, be referred to him; and then will the empire be able to take its place side by side with the other nations of the world. This is now the most urgent duty of the emperor, as it is that of his servants and children. Hence it is that we, daring to offer up our humble expression of loyalty, upon which we pray that the brilliance of the heavenly sun may shine, with fear and reverence bow the head and do homage, ready to lay down our lives in proof of our faith." *

Within a little more than a month from the presentation of this memorial, similar ones were published by one hundred and eighty out of the two hundred and seventy-six clans of Japan, begging to restore their fiefs to the sovereign; and in the end the whole number reached two hundred and forty-one. The feudal system was abolished, and Japan became an empire in fact as in name. The loyal heart of the samurai had stood the supreme test; and one of the

* Adams's History of Japan, vol. ii. p. 181.

knightliest deeds that ever called for human strength of soul created the nation at whose courage the world now marvels, even as it once marvelled at the gentler virtues then deemed Japan's only heritage.

CHAPTER II.

YAMATO DAMASHII.

POSSIBLY because the islands of the Pacific are popularly pictured as having been peopled only by savage or barbarous tribes, the Western mind, in spite of the multitudes of books written upon Japan, seems never to have formed any just or adequate conception of the high civilization there anciently attained and now still held. Her people are given credit only for an extraordinary aptitude for *becoming* civilized. The tremendous political revolution which took place on her emergence from seclusion, and the ensuing sudden adoption of Occidental ways are deemed remarkable, mainly because no other barbarous or even semi-civilized people was ever known to take so great a stride out of a lower state of society, on to the high plane of what we complacently call civilization.

Extraordinary, indeed, would the tran-

sition be were the popular conception of Japan's former condition in the least degree justified. Had the change been an emergence from anything like barbarism, or even semi-civilization, the Island people would be in truth the unique nation. Barbarous tribes do not become civilized by contact with civilization, unless they touch it as conquerers. Otherwise they fade away and perish. Half-civilized people even cannot bear the contact and preserve their identity. It is still, perhaps, an open question whether Christianity has uplifted the so-called heathen; but the fate of lower civilizations when brought into close relations with the higher is not a matter of doubt. Only the fittest survive. The simple fact that Japan has not only survived, but has taken her place to-day among the great powers of the world, attests, therefore, not an emergence from barbarism, as her history for the last thirty years is popularly conceived, but rather the bringing to light of a hitherto unknown civilization, which, though different from our own, is yet worthy of a place beside our best. Furthermore, none who have

read her history, and still less they who through contact with her people are familiar with the outcome of that history in the present life and character of the nation, can for a moment share the popular misconception. None who have studied the annals of the Empire or who, entering into the nation's consciousness, have learned what "*Yamato Damashii*," "The Soul of Japan," means, can fail to find in it the evidence of century-long training in some of the finest virtues of civilization. Surely, if we reckon as the flowering of our Western civilization the keen sense of honor, the love of learning, and the knightly courtesy which our own age of chivalry has bequeathed to us, only ignorance of the chivalric past of the Island Realm can be the excuse of those who speak of it as having only recently become civilized.

Possibly the prevalent misconception is due not merely to popular ignorance of Japanese history, but also to the fact that its chivalric past has continued to so late a day as not yet to be surrounded with the glamour of a bygone age. It has not yet had time to become history. It was only

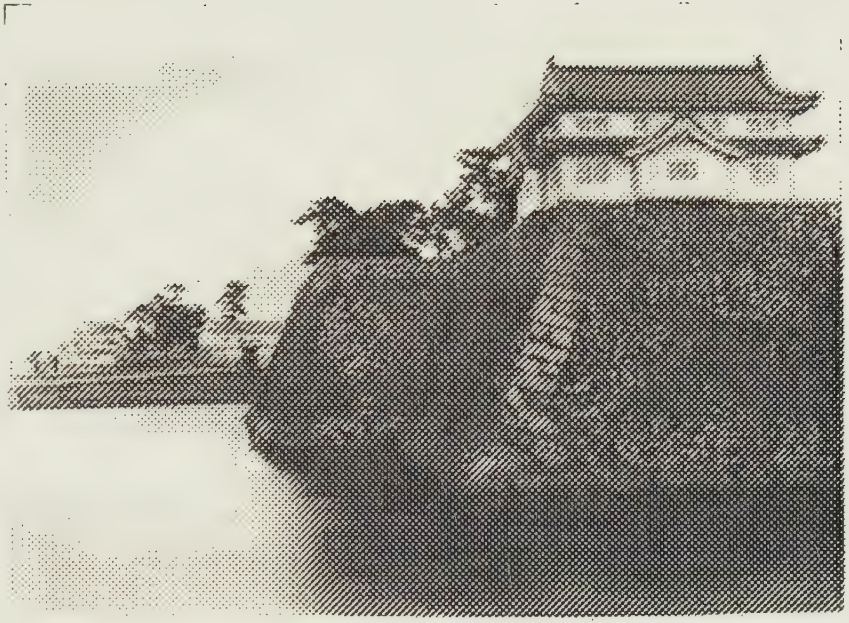
yesterday, indeed, that the vision of an armor-clad knight, as described by one who of all men has best succeeded in giving expression to the "Soul of Japan," attested the lingering of the age of chivalry. The picture is before him of "a handsome youth with the sinister, splendid gaze of a falcon, in full magnificence of feudal war costume. One hand bears the tasseled signal wand of a leader of armies; the other rests on the marvelous hilt of his sword. His helmet is a blazing miracle; the steel upon his breast and shoulders was wrought by armorers whose names are famed in all the museums of the West. The cords of his war coat are golden; and a wondrous garment of heavy silk, all embroidered with billowings and dragonings of gold, flows from his mailed waist to his feet like a robe of fire. How the man flames in his steel and silk and gold like some iridescent beetle — but a War-beetle, all horns and mandibles and menace, despite its dazzlings."*

It was only yesterday that two millions of such panoplied warriors, trained from

* Hearn, "Out of the East," p. 196.

birth for the battle-field, inured to every hardship, and fearless of naught here or hereafter, save dishonor, guarded the battlements of picturesque castles throughout the length and breadth of the Empire.

It was only yesterday that through the silent streets of towns and cities, vast daimios' trains passed on their way to Yeddo, the law requiring their residence in that city for six months each year being as rigid as that which closed, while they were passing, every door and window on their line of march, that no vulgar eye might gaze upon them. Just such a scene as was described by Kämpffer, two hundred years ago, has been witnessed by many a one now living. "It is a sight exceedingly curious and worthy of admiration," said he, "to see all the persons who compose the numerous train of a great prince, the pike-bearers clad in black silk, marching in an elegant order with a decent becoming gravity, and keeping so profound a silence that not the least noise is to be heard, save what must necessarily arise from the motion and rustling of their habits, and the trampling of the horses



OSAKA CASTLE.

and men. Numerous troops of fore-runners, harbingers, clerks, cooks, and other inferior officers, begin the march, they being to provide lodgings, victuals, and other necessary things for the entertainment of the prince, their master, and his court. They are followed by the prince's heavy baggage, packed up either in small trunks, and carried upon horses, each with a banner, bearing the coat of arms and name of the possessor; or else in large chests of red-lacquered leather, again with the possessor's coat of arms, and carried upon men's shoulders, with multitudes of inspectors to look after them." Then come "great numbers of smaller retinues, belonging to the chief officers and noblemen attending the prince, with pikes, scimeters, bows and arrows, umbrellas, palanquins, led horses, and other marks of their grandeur, suitable to their birth, quality, and office. Some of these are carried in norimonos, others in cangos, others go on horseback. The prince's own numerous train, marching in an admirable and curious order, and divided into several troops, each headed by a

proper commanding officer; as, five, more or less, fine led horses, led each by two grooms, one on each side, two footmen walking behind. Five or six, and sometimes more, porters, richly clad, walking one by one, and carrying fassanbacks,* or lackered chests, and japanned neat trunks and baskets upon their shoulders, wherein are kept the gowns, clothes, wearing apparel, and other necessaries for the daily use of the prince; each porter is attended by two footmen, who take up his charge by turns. Ten or more followers, walking again one by one, and carrying rich scimeters, pikes of state, fire-arms, and other weapons in lackered wooden cases, as also quivers with bows and arrows. . . . Two, three, or more men, who carry the pikes of state, as the badges of the prince's power and authority, adorned at the upper end with bunches of cock's feathers, or certain rough hides, or other particular ornaments, peculiar to such or such a prince. They walk one by one, and are attended each by two footmen. A gentleman carrying the prince's hat, which he wears to shelter him-

* Hasami-bako.

self from the heat of the sun, and which is covered with black velvet. He is attended likewise by two footmen. A gentleman carrying the prince's sombrero or umbrella, which is covered in like manner with black velvet. He is attended likewise by two footmen. Some more fassanbacks and varnished trunks, covered with varnished leather, with the prince's coat of arms upon them, each with two men to take care of it. Sixteen, more or less, of the prince's pages, and gentlemen of his bedchamber, richly clad, and walking two and two before his norimon. They are taken out from among the first quality of his court. The prince himself, sitting in a stately norimon, or palanquin, carried by six or eight men, clad in rich liveries, with several others walking at the norimon's side, to take it up by turns. Two or three gentlemen of the prince's bedchamber walk at the norimon's side, to give him what he wants and asks for, and to assist and support him in going in or out of the norimon. Two or three horses of state, the saddles covered with black. One of these horses carries a large elbow chair,

which is sometimes covered with black velvet, and placed on a norikago of the same stuff. These horses are attended each by several grooms and footmen in liveries, and some are led by the prince's own pages. Two pike-bearers. Ten more people carrying each two baskets of a monstrous large size, fixed to the end of a pole, which they lay on their shoulders in such a manner that a basket hangs down before and another behind them. These baskets are more for state than for use. Sometimes some fassanback-bearers walk among them, to increase the troop. In this order marches the prince's own train, which is followed by six or twelve led horses with their leaders, grooms, and footmen all in liveries, a multitude of the prince's domestics, and other officers of his court, with their own very numerous trains and attendants, pike-bearers, fassanback-bearers, and footmen in liveries. Some of these are carried in cangos, and the whole troop is headed by the prince's high steward, carried in a norimon. If one of the prince's sons accompanies his father in the journey to court, he follows with his

own train immediately after his father's norimon. The pages, pike-bearers, umbrellas and hat-bearers, fassanback or chest-bearers, and all the footmen in liveries, affect a strange mimic march or dance, when they pass through some remarkable town or borough, or by the train of another prince or lord. Every step they make they draw up one foot quite to their back, in the meantime stretching out the arm on the opposite side as far as they can, and putting themselves in such a posture, as if they had a mind to swim through the air."

It was only yesterday that all this pomp and circumstance vanished, and the two million samurai, the men who had kept the virtues of chivalry alive even through three centuries of profound peace, furnished the supreme illustration of *Yamato damashii*, the Soul of Japan, by renouncing all that was dear to them at the bidding of their sovereign and becoming mere citizens of the Empire, ready to toil with the humblest in whatever work might serve its interests.

So lately, indeed, did this great renuncia-

tion take place that even yet the shining armor and the keen weapons of these warriors, armor and weapons which, did they illustrate the day of mediæval knighthood in Europe would be worth their weight in gold, now in vast quantities cumber the curio shops of Tokyo and Kioto, and are among the most unsalable wares in the collections.

Although to the Japanese their age of chivalry, dating back many centuries, is indeed history of the most thrilling and romantic sort, history which they never tire of reading and recounting, yet by us, because that age has lasted even into our own prosaic times, and possibly also because it has not heretofore been our wont to take the Japanese in any degree seriously, the samurai has never been ranked with Bayard or Du Guesclin, with the Black Prince or with the Cid.

So far as he was known at all to the West, the two-sworded man, whose sensitiveness to insult and whose intense national feeling occasioned so much trouble with foreigners on the opening of the country, was reckoned a mere swash-

buckler. It was by the samurai sword in those troublous days that many an Englishman who had brutally or unwittingly violated the sacred conventions of the land was hacked to pieces. It was a time of social and political disorganization, and the land was filled with the class of knights known as *ronins* (wave men), knights whose feudal households had been broken up and who owed no direct allegiance to any lord. These irresponsible rovers having become the terror of the country, the impression held and yet holds that Japanese chivalry was but another name for the spirit of turbulence, swagger, and murder. And when further we are told of the privilege which the samurai had enjoyed for centuries, of slaying without fear of punishment any inferiors who chanced to incur their anger, it is but a step to the inference that their lives were largely spent in exercising that privilege. Never did the knighthood of any country labor under a more unwarrantable imputation. Mr. Fukuzawa, often called the Grand Old Man of Japan, is my authority for the state-

ment, that during a period of two and a half centuries, among the hundred thousand samurai of his province, though the knights were men with human passions, and though the cruel privilege above mentioned was undeniably theirs, only three cases had been known in which they had ever exercised it. Indeed, with all the rights and immunities which they enjoyed, and in view of the idle life to which they were mainly doomed during the centuries of the Great Peace, it is only marvelous that they kept so stainless the shields of their knighthood. While the feudal lords to whom they held allegiance were for the most part sunk into the depths of effeminacy and degeneration, the honor of their homes was faithfully upheld by their retainers, and the name of samurai is in Japan to-day the untarnished name, to its people the synonym of the same lofty virtues and heroic devotion which we associate with the truest knight of Mediæval Romance.

And not only is the name untarnished, but also knightly virtue itself has escaped the degeneration which it suffered in

Europe, and has remained to this day a stainless glory. The Western world has seen its sun of chivalry decline until naught of it lingers save the duello, and the so-called "code of honor." But in Japan the samurai soul yet pervades in full force the very life of the nation, and the vendetta, once a samurai privilege, ceased absolutely at a single word from the Emperor.

To the samurai, also, the Island empire is indebted for the preservation and advance of learning in her troublous times, as fully as Europe owes to the Church the inestimable service of this kind which she rendered in the night of the Dark Ages. Here the parallelism is complete except that in Japan this great salvation was wrought by the secular arm, by a zeal for patriotism and for the glory of the land, instead of for the welfare of priestly institutions.

Yet it is with heroic deeds of valor and self-sacrifice, it is with illustrations of the supreme spirit of devoted loyalty, that the name is oftenest associated, and in this regard there is scarcely one of the tales

of knightly daring which fill the pages of either the ancient or mediæval history of Europe, that is not paralleled in the heroic annals of Japan.

The empire has had her Regulus. In a besieged castle the question was whether the weakness of the enemy would warrant waiting for soon-expected relief. A samurai stealing into the camp of the besiegers to ascertain, was captured and threatened with crucifixion unless he reported the hostile force in such strength as to make resistance seem useless. Feigning consent and taken to the bank of the moat, in full sight of his wife and children he shouted the true tidings of the weakness of the enemy, and straightway, smiling with gladness at the glory of his opportunity, met the cruelest of deaths.

Nor has Spartan fidelity been the exclusive possession of the Western warrior. In the late war with China, a Japanese trumpeter was ordered to sound the charge. While executing the order he received his death-wound. But with never a pause or waver, or false note, that charge went

sounding on until death sealed the lips through which it was breathed. Borne to his home for burial, his funeral rites were made, as it were, a festival, his parents vying with each other in their rejoicing over the honorable end of the boy whom they had reared to live and die for his country.

Perhaps the most dramatic episode in the annals of the land, certainly one strikingly illustrative, not only of the daring, but also of the intelligence of the loyal retainers of old, and showing likewise the survival in full force to our own day of the spirit of chivalry, is the story of Narabara.

A few years after the opening of Japan to foreigners, Shimadzu Saburo, the actual ruler of the powerful daimiate of Satsuma, while engaged in the attempt to restore the Emperor to his rightful authority, was greatly embarrassed by the proffered co-operation of a large troop of ronins, who, thinking that he would attempt to drive out the foreigners, were eager to join him. Finding it impossible to reason with them, and fearing that if left to themselves grave disaster to his plans would result, he re-

solved upon an extraordinary course of action, which is thus vividly described by Mr. House.

"Appointing a meeting with the ronins, he sent to them eight of his most trusted followers who had proved themselves expert swordsmen. These he directed to go to the rendezvous; to hold a parley with the insurgent leaders; to convince them, by argument if possible, of the impracticability of their course, but at all hazards to prevent them from proceeding in their rebellious career. To Japanese vassals as devoted as those of Satsuma, no further suggestions were needed. They reached Fusimi late in the evening, and found the greater number of the ronins in a large house of public entertainment. The leaders joined them in a small room on the ground floor, while the others continued their carousals above. Before arriving, the principal of the Satsuma retainers had arranged his plan and communicated it to his subordinates. Every effort should be made to bring the malcontents to reason by straightforward representations of the designs of their master, and by earnest exhortations

that the disorderly campaign they contemplated should be abandoned. If these should fail, the conference could end only in a quarrel, in which event the position and duty of seven of the Satsuma participants was distinctly laid down. The lights were to be simultaneously extinguished, each man was to plant himself at a given distance from his neighbors, to drop upon one knee, and to sweep the space above his head with his drawn sword. The head of the party, Narabara, would spring to the nearest corner, where he would be protected from assault in the rear or directly from the sides, and would attack in the dark any that should approach him. These precautions would not have been enjoined if an encounter upon anything like even terms had been anticipated; but the ronins were several hundred in number, and it was only through the application of some such strategy that the eight leaders could by any chance be disposed of. In case of a general conflict, some of them would have been almost sure to escape, and the mission of the retainers would have failed. It was foreseen that, in the tumult, some of the

inferior ronins would rush to assist their chiefs, and join in the mêlée before the work of destruction could be thoroughly carried out; hence the necessity of having the advantage of darkness and pre-organization on the side of the militant envoys. The interview in the tea-house was long and earnest. Narabara and his companions were sincere in their efforts to settle the affair without violence, as, indeed, they were bound by their instructions to do, if any means could be discovered. For more than two hours they exerted such arguments and eloquence as they could command to persuade the adventurers to disband the troops and return to their homes. These endeavors were totally ineffectual. Having advanced so far, the insurgents declared, they could not and would not recede. If Shimadzu would lead them to the fulfilment of their schemes, they would gladly exterminate the foreigners under his banner. If not, they would undertake the task in their own way. Moreover, they were convinced that the real spirit of the Satsuma clan was in sympathy with them, in spite of all that the

Kokufu might say. Several Satsuma men had joined them within a few hours, and were in hearty unison with their plot. The discussion terminated in confusion and high words, as had been more than half anticipated. At a signal from Narabara, the paper lanterns that hung around the walls were thrown to the ground and trampled upon. The swords of all were instantly drawn. The Satsuma leader darted to his corner, proclaiming his name and inviting attack by loud cries. His seven associates fell on their knees, and, in rigid silence, dealt fatal blows upon all that came within reach of their weapons. The ronins above, warned by the clamor of the chiefs, struggled to descend to their aid, but the ladders of communication had been removed. A few sprang from the windows and mingled blindly and ineffectively in the obscure affray. In less than five minutes from the time that the signal was given, the swords of the Satsuma men passed through the air without resistance. Narabara called to his followers by name, and all but one replied. A light was struck, and its first ray revealed the bodies of

eleven ronins, and one of Shimadzu's messengers stretched lifeless upon the floor.

"But the end of this extraordinary encounter had not yet come. The scene that followed, though unattended by desperate strife and bloodshed, was even more startlingly dramatic. Yielding suddenly to an inspiration that could have had no prevision in his sober calculations, Narabara, without waiting to apprise his companions of his intentions, cast away his sword, threw off his outer garment to show that he was now defenceless, and, clambering up to the apartment above, flung himself, half naked, among the amazed and excited ronins, and fell upon his hands and knees with a salutation that was at the same time a gesture of appeal for momentary forbearance. Before they could recover from their surprise, he had rapidly related the whole story of what had occurred below, and begged to be heard in justification. The nearest of those who heard his words sought to destroy him without ceremony, but a young man from Satsuma, who had lately joined the troop, abruptly confronted them, and, placing himself defiantly

before the prostrate body, proclaimed that he would protect the unarmed suppliant with his own life until he should obtain a hearing. In moments of critical suspense like this, a sudden demonstration of superior boldness is sure to carry all before it. Those who had hastened to avenge their leaders now instinctively yielded, and signified their willingness to listen. Narabara at once declared that he did not mean to plead for himself, and that if, after having received his explanation, they were still determined to pursue their course, his body was at their disposal. He then hastily repeated the arguments he had used below, and said that, although he had failed to convince the chiefs, who were prepared with a regular and carefully contrived plan, his representations should surely have weight with the subordinates, who, left in ignorance of how to proceed, without commanders of experience or tried ability, and thrown into hopeless confusion at the moment when decision and unanimity were most needed, could not contend against the forces which Shimadzu would be able to array against them. As

to what he had himself done, every Japanese samurai knew that it was simply his duty, and the men of Satsuma, above all, would applaud, rather than condemn him for the fidelity and thoroughness with which he had fulfilled his mission. An appeal of this kind, made under circumstances that attested the fearlessness and faith of the speaker, and addressed to an audience composed of soldiers, who, whatever their other errors, had been trained to respect courage and devotion as the highest of human virtues, could not be ineffective. It was, in fact, triumphant. In admiration of his gallantry, Narabara was suffered to go free. In acknowledgment of the force of his reasoning, the ronins admitted the feebleness of their position under the new state of affairs, and pledged themselves to disperse without delay. The ready resolution of Shimadzu, acting through the strong arm of Narabara and his associates, had cut the knot of disaffection and mutiny with a single blow."

Such a scene as this, with its suggestions of feudal strife, of dauntless daring and of chivalrous loyalty to chief and clan, so

vividly recalls traditions of our Europe of three centuries ago, that it is difficult to think of it as having happened in our own day. And yet so near is it to our time that one of the chief actors in the fierce drama, the young Satsuma man who, single-handed, defied his comrades, rushed to the side of the prostrate and unarmed Narabara and insisted upon the suppliant's right to be heard, is to-day one of the Emperor's most trusted advisers, being none other than Marquis Saigo, the present Minister of the Navy Department.

Pregnant with suggestion is this single fact, as illustrating not only the rapidity of the change wrought in the Empire, but also the character of the civilization which it has contributed to the world. It is to be noted as not the least of the advantages of the lightning-like pace which Japan has set for her modern career that her present rulers have been personally trained and disciplined in the very school of chivalry itself. The Japanese Bayard and Du Guesclin, the Far Oriental Black Prince and Cid are themselves still on the field. The age of knighthood is not to

them a tradition or a race-memory, but an actual life experience. In the West, as has already been said, the sun of chivalry has long since set. The Law of Honor has become the absurd Code with the duel as its sole outcome and illustration. Three centuries separate us from the times and the institutions which called for the exercise of the strenuous and virile virtues, making the name of knight a synonym for courage, courtesy, and devotion. These virtues are still in our blood indeed, and in times of great emergency such as our American Civil War they make themselves manifest. But they come to us from a far-away ancestry, upon the mere traditions of whose knightly training we are living, and in these degenerate days of scramble for the means of luxurious living even these traditions are fast losing their power. But in Japan the very men who hold the reins of office, or who are of influence in any sphere of the nation's life, were themselves brought up in the strictest school of chivalric discipline which perhaps the world has ever seen. Inured to severest hardships and trained not only in manly

and martial exercises of every sort, but also in devotion to literature and learning, it is not alone hardship that they have been taught to despise nor learning that they have been schooled to love. Their chiefest discipline has been in the school of knightly courtesy and of fearlessness of everything but dishonor. Not even the training of Spartan youth was harder than that in which the samurai of only a generation ago were reared, and in comparison with it the training of European chivalry was holiday pastime. Self-denial, obedience, courtesy, contempt of pleasure and of gain, loyalty to his chief,—these have filled the vision of life to the knight of Japan. And at the end of life there was neither hope of heaven nor fear of hell, naught to detract from the honor of doing one's duty through love of right for its own sake. Very often, too, that end was self-immolation. Whatever view the Western mind may take of the morality of such suicides as were once so common among the chivalry of Japan, the significance of the rite of *hara-kiri* is by Occidentals as universally misconceived as the name itself is

misspelled. Superfluously revolting as was the prescribed method of self-immolation, in the very exquisiteness of its pain and in the strict observance of the elaborate etiquette of the ceremony with which it was performed, the *hara-kiri* was the natural and fitting outcome of the stern ideals of honor and courtesy constantly held before the Japanese knight and gentleman.

Steeled against all pain and all fear as his training was to render him, what more natural than for him to be ready at an instant's notice to give the last and highest proof that that training was not in vain. And in the grave dignity and punctiliousness with which the ceremony was performed, going far as it did to redeem it from its most revolting feature, we may see in it the fitting culmination of the life of good breeding in the practice of which the knights of the Empire became the exemplars of courtesy. It is as an ever-present reminder of these duties that the wearing of the two swords, one to use against all enemies of his lord, the other ever in readiness to turn upon himself in atonement for fault or for faint-

est suspicion of dishonor, reveals a higher knightly consciousness in the soul of the far Eastern chivalry and a keener sensitiveness to the claims of honor than aught to which the annals or the customs of Mediæval Europe have borne witness. Not only, therefore, because of the actual personal training of Japan's best in the school of chivalry, but also because that school surpassed in its teachings of honor that of our far-off ancestry, should we give to Japan the credit of possessing a higher civilization than ours in the distinctive qualities which we owe to our own knightly descent. It is well, also, in estimating the character of that Oriental civilization to consider not only the nearness of its chivalric past, but also the immemorial extent of that past. Our age of chivalry was of the briefest, its flowering lasting only two centuries, while the knightly past of Japan is coterminous with the history of the Empire.*

* According to the *Kojiki*, the book of ancient traditions, a young prince not yet in his teens having killed his father's murderer, sought refuge with one of the nobles, and was besieged in his house. Parleying with the enemy, the noble said: "'From of old down to the

The samurai of thirty years ago had behind him a thousand years of training in the law of honor, obedience, duty, and self-sacrifice. At his very birth these virtues were already his. His personal nurture only preserved and kept them alive. It was not needed to create or establish them. As a child he had but to be instructed, as indeed he was from his earliest years, in the etiquette of self-immolation. The fine instinct of honor demanding it was in the very blood, else the story of the samurai boy as told by Hearn,* not by any means the only story

present time grandees and chiefs have been known to hide in the palaces of kings. But kings have not yet been known to hide in the houses of grandees. Therefore I think that though a vile slave of a grandee exerting his utmost strength in the fight can scarcely conquer, yet must he die rather than desert a prince who, trusting in him, has entered into his house.' Having thus spoken, he again took his weapons and went in again to fight. Then their strength being exhausted and their arrows finished he said to the prince: 'My hands are wounded and our arrows are likewise finished. We cannot now fight. What shall be done?' The prince replied, saying, 'If that be so there is nothing more to do. Now slay me.' So he thrust the prince to death with his sword, and forthwith killed himself by cutting off his own head."

*"Is that really the head of your father?" a prince once asked of a samurai boy only seven years old. The

of the kind in Japanese annals would be simply incredible. Yamato Damashii—the Soul of Japan—the instinct of loyalty, the impulse of self-devotion, the spirit of unquestioning obedience to duty, the worship of the beauty of self-sacrifice for itself alone, in a word the very flower and crown of civilization, is there no mere tradition and has been there no ephemeral experience. It is the vital force in the nation's present life as it has been the glory and pride of its immemorial past.

Nor does it seem to have lost its force in the transformation of the nation's outward life. The two swords with their significant reminders of loyal duty are indeed no longer worn by the belted knights of the Empire, and of the gory rite of self-immolation there are only rare in-

child at once realized the situation. The freshly-severed head was not his father's. The daimyo had been deceived, but further deception was necessary. So the lad, after having saluted the head with every sign of reverential grief, suddenly cut out his own bowels. All the prince's doubts vanished before that bloody proof of filial piety. The outlawed father was able to make good his escape; and the memory of the child is still honored in Japanese drama and poetry.

stances of survival. One can scarcely believe, as he meets the courteous, unobtrusive gentlemen now at the heads of all the Departments of State, that only a generation ago these men, being rarely of noble lineage or daimyo blood, but only of samurai rank, were the picturesque and loyal clansmen of feudal chieftains, ready on the instant to give the supreme proof of knightly devotion. One passes now in the city streets the trim and ever sedate policemen, with never cause for suspicion, save perhaps from their scholarly aspect and dignified bearing, that these also were once knights of the Empire. Their short sword, for self-immolation, has disappeared, but not the punctilious care and fidelity with which they perform their every duty to their superiors, and keep their honor stainless. The longer sword, changed to a Western fashion, still hangs at the side, and when on occasion it leaps from its scabbard the training of centuries is revealed in the wielding of its deadly blade.

Nor is it only among the Government leaders and officials that the samurai spirit

is manifesting itself in the new career upon which the nation has entered. As of old, the Japanese knight is not only the sword, but also the brain of Japan. As during the age of seclusion and the Great Peace, while never forgetting or slighting his duty as a warrior, he became equally devoted to the advancement of learning, so to-day the marvelous progress of education in the Empire is largely due to his efforts and his devotion. Perhaps the most conspicuous illustration of such influence is to be found in the person of Japan's Great Commoner, Mr. Fukuzawa Yukichi — whose championship of true democracy, with never the faintest suspicion of disloyalty to his sovereign, has won him the name of the Gladstone of the Empire — while he holds a place in the enthusiastic affection and admiration of his hosts of pupils to be compared only with that of England's Thomas Arnold. The founder and head of the Keiogijiku, a college now only second to the Imperial University in standing and importance, the editor of the leading newspaper in Tokyo, a writer of extraordinary vigor and clearness, and an

orator famed throughout the Empire for his eloquence, he has been called by Dr. Griffis, "the intellectual father of half the youths of Japan." That he is of samurai birth goes without saying, or were it questioned, two acts of his, one showing the samurai spirit of indomitable courage, and the other the samurai instinct of uncalculating self-devotion, would establish his lineage. The first, early in the new era, was his open condemnation of the custom of hara-kiri, on the ground that suicide was lacking in the highest elements of true courage. The indignation aroused by this declaration among his own class was as intense as their conversion to his view was rapid, there being to-day only very rarely an instance of the morbid survival of the old custom.

That in taking this position no suspicion of personal cowardice could attach to him, is clearly shown by his other act, which was none else than one of self-immolation in the highest and truest sense. He has abjured his samurai rank and has become one of the heimin, or common people. Assailed as he often is for his inconsist-

encies, and for his unpractical theories, in one thing he has pursued a course of unswerving consistency and fidelity, and that is his espousal of the cause of genuine democracy.

Thoroughly simple in his own tastes, of Spartan purity of character, an almost fanatical advocate of pure home life as the panacea for all earthly ills, — to him the elevation and sanctity of the homes of the people, and of the industries of the nation, have become an absorbing interest, worthy of the making of any sacrifice. To this end he has not only steadfastly declined every official position which his eminence and his immense popular following would easily secure to him, but he has also discarded his samurai rank, and become in every sense one of those to whose welfare his life has been devoted. He may be said to be to-day, therefore, not only the Gladstone and the Thomas Arnold, but also the Tolstoï of Japan.

But though giving up a name which is dearer than life to one of the chivalry of Japan, he has but exemplified the samurai spirit, and testified to its ineradicable

nature. The knights of the Empire may abjure, but they cannot disguise their rank. The discipline of centuries is not to be overborne even by the most revolutionary epoch that any nation has experienced, and the Soul of Japan is still alive. It is simply as Miss Bacon has said, that "the pride of clan is now changed to pride of race; loyalty to feudal chief has become loyalty to the Emperor as sovereign; and the old traits of character exist under the European costumes of to-day, as under the flowing robes of the two-sworded retainer."

Happening to pass an evening at Mr. Fukuzawa's house, just after the murder of a missionary by Japanese swordsmen, the talk turned upon the Japanese method of sword practice as differing greatly from that of the West. Our host kindly volunteered to show us the difference. Clad in his Japanese dress he had but to place the two swords in his belt and stand at guard. Then with an almost imperceptible movement both hands sought the longer weapon. The instant they touched the hilt, the great blade flashed in the air and came down

with a cleaving swish so lightning-like in its rapidity, and with so deadly a suggestiveness in its very sound, that for the moment our hearts stood still with the fearsomeness of the stroke.

The significance of the scene was far more to us than the fear it inspired. What we had witnessed was no mere bit of sword practice. It was a glimpse of the tremendous reserve of force which the Empire has stored up for herself by the age-long and late-continued training of her best in the exercises and virtues of chivalry. A mere touch of the hilt of the old sword had transformed the leading educator of the realm into the fierce samurai, ready on the instant with either weapon or life to devote himself to his country's weal.

It is to such men as these, the very soul of Japan, that the task of bringing the Empire out of the Middle Ages into the Nineteenth Century is committed. They are to-day serving the nation in almost every conceivable capacity, even in the once despised walks of trade and barter. Many of them have become wretchedly poor, but not in spirit, for among their number cases of

degeneracy are extremely rare. 'Everywhere they are regarded and reverenced as the saving element in society, and put forward as leaders of the new era.

The Empire is now governed and its laws administered by its knighthood, and whatever exception may be taken to the ability and competency of the mediæval warriors to-day transformed into modern statesmen, theirs is as clean a government as can anywhere be found in the world.

Nor are they, by any means, as the marvelous advance of the nation testifies, wholly unskilled in the arts of government and diplomacy. All the progress of the last forty years, as well as many of the steps leading up to it in the declining days of the old *régime*, have been their work, and it is safe to predict that in the future, as in the old feudal times, the chief interest of Japanese history will centre in them. While the old nobility have become effete and the priesthood without influence; while the trading class, always held in low esteem, has never yet recovered from the social stigma cast upon it; while the farmer under the burden of extreme pov-

erty remains as he has been for centuries; and while artists and artisans are steadily deteriorating in the quality of the distinctive work for which they have been famed, and are catering to the degenerate tastes of the West,—the Soul of Japan, as if animated and inspired by the new career upon which the Empire is entering, seems even in greater measure than of old to be bringing to bear upon the realm the knightly virtues of chivalry for the maintenance of the national welfare.

CHAPTER III.

THE PEOPLE UNDER FEUDALISM.

IT goes without saying that the cheerful, contented, cleanly, and courteous common people of Japan, whose superior training in many of the virtues usually reckoned as exclusively Christian is acknowledged by every unprejudiced observer, are not what they are because of the introduction of Western civilization. They are not the creation of a day, nor the product of a single revolution, nor the outcome of a recent brief experience of the nation's life, nor are they, any more than the peoples of other lands, the result of their environment alone. Their better qualities and virtues, which in any case can come only from long training, must be attributed mainly to the beneficent institutions and wise administration of an immemorial civilization.

It must have been a civilization, too, which regarded the welfare and told upon the condition of the masses to a greater

extent than has been the case with the leading civilizations of the Western world. These have been mainly civilizations in the benefits of which the common people have not largely shared. Under them there have been wealth and learning among the classes while the masses have remained poor and ignorant. There have been honor, courtesy, and devotion conspicuously developed among a favored few, while the many have been left to live as the beasts that perish. But the study of the social institutions of Old Japan yields this unique result, that there, from a very early period, prevailed conditions which fostered as nearly an ideal democracy as in ancient days was possible.

The fact that in the seclusion of the Island Realm the Japanese built up unaided a social state in which the relative benefit to the common people was as great as it was to the favored classes, or, in a word, in which there were, in a certain sense, no favored classes, not only makes their civilization unique but places it high in the scale of comparative value among the civilizations of the world. A nation

which, side by side with the cultivation in a preëminent degree of the chivalric virtues in its higher ranks of society, fostered in its lower classes so many of the qualities which make for the people's happiness, content, and self-respect, may, therefore, well become an interesting study for the sociologist.

Fortunately, the materials for such study have of late become available and furnish a fairly adequate picture of the practical democracy which existed in Japan under feudal rule.

When, in the beginning of the seventeenth century, the policy of seclusion was decided upon, the Government was, of course, confronted with the problem of supplying a large and rapidly multiplying population on a comparatively small group of islands, with only about one-twelfth of its area available for cultivation, with the almost complete prohibition of exchange of products with other lands, and with severest penalties in force for every attempt at emigration. This problem, it may well be imagined, must have grown more serious every year, especially in view

of the profound peace which prevailed for two and a half centuries, thus completely doing away with the check to over-population furnished by the war-waste.

It is in the exigencies arising from this problem that may be found the secret of the establishment of the peculiar democracy of Japan, and the explanation of many of its idyllic features.

The leading and most natural result of the situation was the exaltation of the farmer class. The cultivation of the soil was raised to the dignity of a profession, nay, even of a fine art, especially in the provinces under the direct control of the Shogunate. Every effort was made by Government not only to improve the condition but also to cultivate the self-respect of the agricultural classes. The farmer was made to rank next to the samurai in the social scale, and his individuality and independence were assiduously cherished.*

* The spirit of all administration of land revenues was to give the farmer the benefit of all doubts and not to insist on technicalities. His prosperity should excite the satisfaction rather than the cupidity of his lord. The *hyakusho-tsubure* or "farmer destroyer" was a *rôle* utterly

As if to emphasize his importance, the merchant, the mere trader, was put below him in rank, and no farmer was even allowed to become a merchant without the consent of the Government, the idea being that this was a lowering of his position and that the dignity of the cultivator of the soil should be preserved. The result of this policy of the exaltation of agricultural labor, was the creation of a real and in many respects an ideal democracy under the guidance of perhaps the most aristocratic government that the world has ever seen.

The fostering of the spirit of independence and self-respect among the farming population led to the formation of village communities as highly organized and as independent and democratic in the conduct of their municipal affairs as those of New England. The iron hand of the central Government was indeed every-

opposed to the economic policy of the founder of the dynasty and his successors. Taxation might be pushed to the utmost ability to pay, but it was never permitted to go beyond this, or to force an industrious farmer into bankruptcy or to borrowing on a mortgage.—Transactions Asiatic Soc. of Japan, Vol. XIX.—1 p. 57.

where seen but hardly ever felt. "The laws," says Dr. Simmons, "under which the people lived came out and up from them instead of down and upon them. They were mainly local customs matured by centuries of growth and experience, the general principle of their enactment being that any custom of the rural districts which had existed for fifty years, or more, should be respected and recognized as law."*

Here was a basis for the consciousness on the part of the farmers of being self-governed under laws which they themselves had made. The stimulus thus given to the democratic spirit can hardly be overestimated, but the results testify in a large degree to its force. Instead of the rural population living in ignorance of the laws and hence of individual rights,

* There was a Kioto saying, *Tenka-hatto, mikka-hatto* —government-made laws are but three-day laws. All laws, that is, and all officials, are constantly changing, are not fixed on solid ground. The government of the people by themselves—*mura*-ho, village rule, *cho ho*, town rule, *ka ho*, family rule, these are the true sources of order, of the permanent and deep-seated modes of action which constitute the government.—Transactions Asiatic Soc. of Japan, Vol. XIX.—1 p. 50.

there was probably no country in the world, says the writer just quoted, "where the mass of the people down to the smallest farmer in the possession of a few square yards of land were more familiar with their rights and duties than in Japan."

How thoroughly the esteem in which the farmer's occupation was held contributed to his self-respect, and emboldened him in the assertion of his rights, and how careful also of those rights was the central Government, is shown by the fact that a decided and firm appeal against injustice, though it often cost him who made it his head, was nearly always successful. The story of the Ghost of Sakura, told by Mitford, a tale almost as much of a favorite with the Japanese as that of the Forty-seven Ronins, is as illustrative of the chivalry of the farmers as the latter is of the devotion of the samurai. Sôgorô, a village chief, knowing well the consequences to himself, journeys to the capital, intercepts the litter of the Shogun, and presents his petition for the redress of grievances un-

der which the villagers have long suffered. The petition is heeded and the wrongs are righted. But with all his family the brave man suffers death for his breach of the conventions. The fact of his ranking next to the samurai had evidently imbued him, as it doubtless also had imbued multitudes of his class, with the samurai spirit of absolute devotion and self-sacrifice.*

A like degree of loyal affection toward the central Government seems also to have been stimulated among the rural population by the consideration shown them by their ruler, and his fostering care for their interests.

This care was repaid by the positive pride and delight which the farmers took in the paying their taxes, a fact for which there is no parallel to be found in any other communities in the world. "Taxa-

* In early times the division of *kyakusho* (farmers) and samurai was unknown; all were farmers. During the wars the strong farmers went to fight and the weaker ones remained to till the land. Between 1321 and 1334 when the greatest internal confusion existed, the separation between the farmer class and the samurai class occurred. *Jikata Hanrei-roku*, Vol. 4, quoted in Transactions Asiatic Soc. of Japan, Vol. XIX.—1 p. 79.

tion, as understood or felt by people of most countries, is a burden imposed, a kind of robbery of the hard-earned means of the people. But it was, as a rule, quite differently regarded by the people of Japan. The payment of taxes did not seem to be considered by the peasantry as a burden, but as a loyal duty in which they took more or less pride. It was an offering, as the word *mitsugi-mono* signifies. The time of the annual payment of the rice at the collectors' storehouses, where each farmer's rice was submitted to inspection, instead of being an occasion of sorrow and irritation, was more like a fair where each vied with the other in presenting for official inspection the best return of rice. It was always a source of mortification for any one when his rice was rejected or declared improperly cleaned for market. Prizes were awarded for the best quality and yield, which stimulated the farmers in its production. The tax-rice was regarded as a precious thing not to be defiled. A story illustrating this is told of the third Shogun, who became for a

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time the real ruler of Japan. Stopping one day at a farmer's house, he inadvertently sat down upon some bags of rice which had been carefully prepared for transportation to the collectors' storehouse. The farmer immediately in an angry tone ordered the Shogun (whom he did not know) to get off, saying that was the lord's rice and was not to be defiled or treated in a disrespectful manner. The story goes on to state that the great chief, in admiration of this spirit of the poor farmer in his loyalty to his lord, rewarded him by calling him to a place in his service. An old friend, the son of a former provincial governor, has given me his recollections of the annual collection of the tax-rice, when he used to go with his father to see the delivery at the Government depot. The farmers seemed to vie with each other in the neatness of the straw package and in the quality and cleanliness of the grain."*

The seemingly cordial, not to say affectionate relations thus existing between the Government and the people of Old Japan

* Transactions Asiatic Soc. of Japan, Vol. XIX.—1. p. 57.

may indeed have been grounded in purest selfishness, the rulers realizing the necessity of showing the utmost consideration for the welfare of those to whom alone they could look for their revenues, and the farmers in return regarding the Government with a kind of religious awe as the ark of their salvation; but whatever the motive, the result was a distinct gain for some of the highest virtues of civilization, and the picture presented reveals the peasantry of Mediæval Japan in a condition as much superior to that which existed among the masses in Mediæval Europe as it is possible for the imagination to conceive. Its force as a civilizing factor can hardly be overrated. Institutions and policies fostering cheerfulness, content, self-respect, and industry, joined with an earnest and self-sacrificing loyalty, are at least as likely to produce an outcome worthy of the name of civilization as the system of plunder, rapine, and oppression which, in the main, marked the relations between the feudal lords of Europe and their helpless vassals. Be this as it may, the life of the Japanese people under feudalism forms a unique

chapter for the study of the sociologist, leading to conclusions of most absorbing interest.

Our New England communities, for example, in their institution of town meetings, the germ of American democracy, are justly given credit for having solved the problem of local self-government, out of which have come, in large measure, the better features of American civilization. Yet New England not only had the advantage of establishing her institutions in a new and free country, but also she could profit by all the experience of the Old World of Europe. To Japan, under perhaps the most despotic and aristocratic government of the intensely conservative Orient, belongs the credit of having, in strict seclusion from the rest of mankind, worked out the same problem in the self-same way.

In the management of their local affairs the village communities possessed an almost complete autonomy. Local taxation, for example, was wholly under their own control. The order of procedure plainly shows this. "An estimate of the necessary

local expenses was made out by the *nanushi* (mayor), *kumi-gashira* (heads of companies), and *toshi-yori* (patriarchs). At its head the following principles were rehearsed:

"1. Unreasonable things which the officers wish to do without the consent of the farmers are not to be done.

"2. Nothing proposed by the *nanushi* for selfish purposes can be done without the consent of the farmers.

"3. There must be economy in the use of money for village purposes.

"4. This paper, if agreed to by all, is to be final, and the money appropriated is to be paid.

" The farmers were then called together, the estimate laid before them, and each item considered. When all the farmers had signed and sealed, the estimate became valid. It was then taken to the *daikwan*, and sealed in approval by him. The *daikwan* (Representative of the central Government) had no power to increase the estimate, or to forbid its being adopted. He could only examine and advise. His duty was to see that the *nanushi* did not

'squeeze' or oppress the people. If the farmers had doubts about the proper use of the money, they could demand and have an official examination."*

The very basis of organization in these village communities is also indicative of the thoroughness of the democratic spirit which permeated their life, even to the occasional levelling of all social distinctions.

"Every five families were united in a *kumi*, or company. The sole principle of division was contiguity of residence. Thus it might happen that a rich farmer with extensive possessions was grouped with his poorest tenant. A wealthy merchant would be found with a blacksmith or a cooper, the *nanushi* (mayor) with the most humble mechanic or tradesman."

Here may perhaps be found the germ of that social democracy, which, in view of the intensely aristocratic organization of society, the inordinate class pride pervading all ranks, and the rigid observance of etiquette enforced upon every man, woman, and child in the Empire, forms one of the most contradictory features of its social

* Transactions Asiatic Soc. of Japan, Vol. XIX. — 1 p. 116.

intercourse. Nowhere else has there existed such an unapproachable aristocracy, and at the same time nowhere else could be found, under the common conditions of social life, such complete obliteration of social distinctions, or such a spirit of apparent good-fellowship between man and man pervading all ranks and classes. I have myself seen in his home a Japanese noble with his retainers, under conditions where the observance of conventions was required, and the gulf between them seemed impassable. I have seen them also at times when no special etiquette was demanded, and then nothing could exceed the genuineness of the spirit of *camaraderie* pervading their intercourse. On the evening of New Year's day, the common birthday of all Japanese, it was the custom, I was told by the wife of the Master of Ceremonies of the Imperial Household, for her husband to invite to their house every servant, even to the humblest in their employ. In that festive gathering the spirit of fun dominated everything, and all the family, including the Imperial Master of Ceremonies himself, joined in the sports, paying

even the forfeits which involved the smearing of the face with the black marks of defeat. Another charming custom was for the heads of the family, on occasion of the individual birthday of either, to issue invitations to one representative of each family of servants to accompany their master and mistress to the theatre.

How far this feeling of good-fellowship and the obliteration, on occasion, of all distinctions of rank, antedated the *kumi* system,* whether it arose from the long isolation of the Japanese people and their consequent dependence upon each other for amusement and cheer, or whether it

* "The system, except in remote districts, has already gone into decay, a result, of course, of the wide-reaching changes which have followed what is known as the 'Restoration.' What is most surprising, is that thousands of the rising generation have never even heard of the *goningumi* (five-family group), and not one in a hundred of the educated classes has any idea of its past scope and importance. Yet it is beyond doubt that the social importance of the system was immense. Characterized by a method of grouping, whose tendency was to level all social distinctions of rank, wealth, or person, the influence of the *kumi* in moulding and determining the form of society was marvelous, and has no parallel in the history of any country with which I am acquainted." Dr. Simmons's Notes, Transactions Asiatic Soc., Vol. XIX.—1 p. 99.

was at times simply the necessary and inevitable reaction from the unbearable burden of etiquette imposed upon ordinary intercourse, it is, of course, impossible to say. But it is quite reasonable to believe that the early grouping of families, without regard to social rank or standing, which constituted the unit of the village communities, was a powerful stimulant of that democratic spirit which has made the Japanese the best-humored as well as the best-mannered people of the world.

Another prominent characteristic of Japanese society, attracting the attention of every foreign observer and closely allied to the development of the true democratic spirit among them, may be even more directly and surely traced to the early establishment of this peculiar unit of social life in the rural communities. It became the source of the feeling of mutual responsibility and of the kindly disposition toward mutual helpfulness, still alive in any given neighborhood. Other democracies have been characterized mainly by a disposition to assert rights. In Japan its fundamental principle seems to have

been the assumption of duties and responsibilities.

Each *kumi*, or group of five households, chose one of their number for head man, through whom all the general business of the group was transacted, and without whose seal no such business could be valid. In some regards also the private affairs of each member came under the supervision of the *kumi* as a body. "In this way the more shiftless were prevented from incurring liabilities which might otherwise be troublesome to the group. For as a rule the *kumi* as a body was responsible for the defaults of its members and even of their wives, children, and servants. The carelessness or evil-doing of a single member meant full responsibility on the part of the other four also." This was an arrangement which might easily have its disadvantages, but it would be impossible to estimate the access of dignity and kindliness which it must have imparted to each member of the group. Every man felt himself not only a citizen, but a responsible official, to whose fidelity the welfare of others was entrusted. And

out of the sense of mutual responsibility must have grown by an inevitable necessity the impulse to mutual service which has given to the land that atmosphere of human kindliness in which foreigners, escaping from the fierce competitions of the Western world, find it so pleasant to live.*

Though, indeed, limited at the outset to the five families of a single group, the feeling of responsibility, and the resultant desire to be of service, could by no possibility be long held within those limits, for there was not one in the whole community who did not have a share in the system, and who was not, therefore, subject to its exalting and kindly influences. Neighborhoods could not by any possibility escape its contagion, and out of it has come the custom of neighborhood aid

*The author of the *Yamato Hansei*, commenting on the *gonin-gumi* system, as carried out in the territory of Yagyū Tajima no Kami says: "The *gonin-gumi* system, as administered here, was admirably perfect. A *kumi* was indeed like a family; its members felt a similar interest in each other, and the pains and pleasures of each were shared by the others in a wonderful degree. The welfare of each *kumi* was felt to have an important influence on the political importance of the fief."

which in Japan so largely takes the place of our insurance companies, savings-banks, hospitals, children's homes, and other business and charitable organizations. Drive through the streets of Tokyo on some occasion calling for a general illumination, and, if you are observant, you will notice that all the lanterns in a given locality are the same in design. As you pass a certain point, the design suddenly changes, and so again and again as other sections of the city are reached and passed. These points of change in the lanterns are interesting as marking the limits of the various ancient villages of which Tokyo is now a vast aggregation. In many regards, the features of the social organization of these villages and neighborhoods are even now distinct, and as communities they have never been merged in the metropolitan whole. They still retain, for example, their respective old-time *matsuris*, or village festivals, each having its own date of celebration, so that there is scarcely a week in the whole year when one or more of such festivals is not in progress in some part of the city. In numberless other

ways each of these communities evinces a local and distinct consciousness, this consciousness being specially marked in the strong feeling of neighborliness which prevails, and by the numerous ways in which the principle of mutual service is observed. As is seldom the case in the great cities of the West, the people in those of Japan know their neighbors and take as lively an interest in each other's affairs as though they dwelt in small and isolated communities. Such interest in others' concerns might easily be ascribed to a measurably common human propensity to which the Japanese, as a race, are excessively prone, they being, perhaps, the most gossipy people anywhere to be found; but the system of mutual service or neighborhood aid, so universal throughout the Empire as to hold its ground even in large cities, must be a more or less direct survival of that genuine fellowship which prevailed in the feudal village communities, and of which the *kumi*, or grouping of families, was the germ. In the rural districts it to-day often finds as full expression as of old. Visiting one day a tiny village famed

for its manufacture of the beautiful cloisonné ware, I found the chief workshop of the place well-nigh deserted, with numberless pieces of the ware in different stages of the multiform process of manufacture. Asking the cause for the stoppage of work, I was told that the season for rice-planting having been unusually late that year, all hands had turned out to help their neighbors in the emergency. Now, to any one knowing the difference between the two occupations, the simple contrast between the deftness, the delicacy of touch, and the refined taste required for the production of the exquisite ware, and the inexpressibly filthy, coarse, degrading character of the processes of rice cultivation, would be amply sufficient to prove the strength of the bond of neighborliness in that community.

In the old *mura* (village) every evil contingency or calamity found in this bond its remedy or alleviation. Every neighborhood became its own insurance company and charitable organization. In case of loss by fire, — unless, as still happens not infrequently, the whole neighborhood was

destroyed, — a contingency which to-day makes our system of fire insurance impossible in Japan, — the neighbors joined in reëstablishing the home and replenishing the stock of the unfortunate one, the extreme simplicity of living rendering this a comparatively easy matter.

Provision was made not only for all possible happenings of this kind, but also for an equitable apportionment of the expense which such happenings might involve.

The discoverer of a foundling was with his *kumi* made responsible for providing the child with a home in some family, the cost being assessed as follows:

From the finder's house owner, three-tenths in money.

From his five-men company, two-tenths in money or labor.

From the other wards-men (house owners), five-tenths in money or labor.

The same parties were assessable in the same proportion for the cost of burial where a stranger was found dead.

Where a man was involved in litigation in another jurisdiction, and was too poor

to pay his travelling expenses, a like sharing even of this item was provided for.

The occasions for assessment under this last head, however, must have been comparatively infrequent, as it required extraordinary nerve to run counter to the public sentiment in a Japanese community, so far as to carry a dispute into court. An intense repugnance to litigation, where it could by any possibility be avoided, is a marked characteristic of the Japanese disposition. This repugnance grows from the same root as does Japanese politeness, namely, the innate desire to smooth over the sharp points of life, and to make existence agreeable and tranquil. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that the early village communities constituted themselves courts of arbitration as well as insurance companies and charitable organizations. The procedure of these courts was also charmingly characteristic and suggestive of the Japanese philosophy of life. As described by Dr. Simmons, "In case of a disagreement between members of a *kumi*, the five heads of families met and endeavored to settle the matter. All minor difficulties

usually were ended in this way. A time was appointed for the meeting; food and wine were set out, and there was moderate eating and drinking, just as at a dinner-party. This, they thought, tended to promote good feeling and to make a settlement easier; for everybody knows, they said, that a friendly spirit is more likely to exist under such circumstances. Even family difficulties were sometimes settled in this way. If a settlement failed to be brought about, or a man repeated his offence frequently, he might be complained of to the next in authority, the *kumi-gashira*; or else the neighbors might take matters into their own hands and break off intercourse with him, refusing to recognize him socially. This usually brought him to terms. An appeal to the higher authorities was as a rule the practice in the larger towns and cities only, where the family unity was somewhat weakened, and not in the villages, where there was a great dislike to seeking outside coercion, and where few private disagreements went beyond the family or *kumi*. A case which could not be settled in this way was regarded as a disreputable

one, or as indicating that the person seeking the courts wished to get some advantage by tricks or by dishonesty. In arranging for a marriage-partner for son or daughter, such families as were in the habit of using this means of redress were studiously avoided. It was a well-known fact that in those districts where the people were fond of resorting to the courts, they were generally poor in consequence. The time spent and the money lost reduced the community to poverty."

This strong insistence upon arbitration in the early communities may indeed have been as much a matter of necessity as an outcome of the kindly disposition of the Japanese, for then, in an even greater degree than now, poverty of the most pinching kind was everywhere the condition of the rural districts, and then, as now, litigation was recognized as a most expensive luxury. But to assign this most praiseworthy institution of neighborhood adjustment to a merely prudential motive, scarcely lessens to any appreciable extent the volume of evidence testifying to the genuine communal sympathy which pre-

vailed. To summarize the examples adduced by Dr. Simmons: In a case of illness where the help of the sufferer's immediate family was not available or sufficient, the members of his *kumi* became the next resource, they rendering him all possible assistance, and, where necessary, taking their turns in the cultivation of his land. That task becoming too long-continued or proving too severe for them, the entire village was notified through the mayor, and all lent a hand. In the building or the making of extensive repairs of a farmer's house everybody helped, the farmer paying only the regular carpenters, and merely providing food for the rest. If he was very poor, the whole cost of the house was defrayed from the emergency fund of the village. If a poor man's house was destroyed, shelter was furnished in one of the temples, and if a whole village burned, the neighboring villages turned out and helped, the lord and the large landowners supplying wood gratis.

Nor did this kindly disposition toward the poor seem to be confined to the rural districts. It infected, and, to a great degree,

it still infects the entire nation. In the modern code of customs, as in that of ancient law, society in Japan even to-day appears to be fashioned upon a principle directly the reverse of that which prevails in the West. Here it is the common plaint that the poor live for the sake of the rich. Such a plaint could by no possibility be made there. If prevailing customs are an index of former conditions, it would appear that in the Island Empire the rich have always lived, and are still to a great extent living, for the sake of the poor.

In the West poverty entails upon its victims the necessity of paying the highest prices for food and fuel. Coal bought by the basket makes the price per ton excessive. In Japan the buying in small quantities is to a certain extent regarded as evidence of a lack of means, and, therefore, the purchaser is entitled to the utmost consideration and the largest possible discount. Asking the price of a certain article, a figure was named to me. "How much by the dozen?" I then inquired; instantly the price was greatly advanced. My question was plain evidence of superior

ability to pay, and the tax was therefore levied. It was no extortion. In Japanese eyes, their system is simply an equitable mode of taxation. The rich pay the high prices that goods may be offered to the poor at the lowest possible rates. At a tea house (tavern), for example, the usual rates for entertainment are so low that the poorest may avail themselves of such entertainment. These rates are the same nominally to all, rich and poor, but if the wealthy guest at parting does not leave in addition to his reckoning an amount of *chadai* (tea money) in proportion to his presumed or known ability to pay, his standing in the estimation of his countrymen is perceptibly lowered, it being these gifts which make it possible for the poor to be cheaply housed and fed. Go on foot to a shop and you are charged one price; approach it in a *jinrikisha*, and you will have to pay more for your purchase; drive up in a carriage, and rates for all articles are correspondingly advanced. Foreigners are often incensed at these variations of price, and call the custom hard names. They complain of being overcharged be-

cause they are foreigners. It is not because they are foreigners, but because all foreigners, especially Americans, are looked upon as mines of wealth, and, therefore, become lawful subjects for taxation for the benefit of the poor, according to the ancient equities of the Japanese people.

That such a sentiment or custom is indeed but the reflex of the feudal social state, may be seen by a glimpse at the laws of that time in their bearing upon the interests of the poor. Dr. Simmons lays much stress, for example, upon the exceedingly small holdings of land, as indicating a recognized principle that the possession of property was the inherent right of the many, not of the few. The land laws themselves would seem to support this view. They not only discouraged the ownership of large tracts, especially by non-residents, but they made it next to impossible for the small owners to dispose of their holdings. The poor were thus carefully guarded against the fate of becoming dependent on great landed proprietors. The severest penalties were attached to the violation of the law which thus aimed

directly against the extremes of wealth and poverty. If a farm was sold "the offender was imprisoned or banished. The buyer was fined and his land confiscated, and in case of his death his son suffered instead. If there had been a witness of the sale, he was fined. The *nanushi* (mayor) of the village was ordered to resign his office."*

In the relations of employer and employed, or of house owner and tenant, the interests of the latter were always made paramount, even to the extent of doing seeming injustice to the former. In case, for example, of a partial failure of the crop, leaving only enough for the support of the laborer, the latter could claim the whole, and leave his employer nothing for his share. Even the surplus which a landowner had saved in a year of plenty, must be loaned in a year of distress to the tillers of the land, to be made up when luck turned again. Also, in hard times, provision must be made for rebate of rental. As for evictions, they were almost unknown. Brave, indeed, the house owner who dared, in the face of the opprobrium which would

* Transactions Asiatic Soc. of Japan, Vol. XIX. — 1 p. 37.

HOUSE BOAT MUKOJIMA TOKIO.

be visited upon him, to claim his legal right to eject a tenant, the universal presumption being that there were none of the latter class who would refuse to pay rent, except by reason of absolute inability. This presumption obtains to this day to such an extent that even in Tokyo, modern and Western as it has become, public opinion is still greatly effective against any resort to eviction. The spirit which animated all these laws, written and unwritten, is furthermore exemplified by the fact that their executors "were instructed directly, or given to understand, that the principle on which their judgment was to be based, in any conflict of the rich and the poor, was to give the latter the full benefit of the doubt."*

It was in such ways as these, namely, the exaltation of the farmer class; the raising of agricultural labor and life to the dignity of a profession; the fostering of the feeling of self-respect in the cultivators of the soil by the grant of a system of local self-government; the encouragement of a genuinely democratic spirit in the

* Transactions Asiatic Soc. of Japan, Vol. XIX. — 1 p. 75.

rural communities; and, above all, a sedulous care for the protection of the interests of the poor, that the central government succeeded, so far as its own revenues and the support of the masses were concerned, in solving the tremendous problems which confronted it, when it shut an empire out from the world. But all these means would have been of but slight avail in the premises, were not the nation also trained by its rulers in the exercise of the strictest economies. To this end, therefore, the government, as if recognizing it to be of the highest importance, devoted a large share of its energy.

The result was what may be considered the most extraordinary system of paternalism that any land has known, and this feature of the public policy, combined with the principle of local self-government, everywhere permitted and encouraged, furnishes, perhaps, the most remarkable of those direct contradictions with which Japanese life abounds.

In a democracy in many regards well-nigh idyllic, there ruled a despotism which made itself felt in every corner of every

home. Independent in the conduct and administration of their municipal affairs, in their domestic concerns the villagers were practically deprived of their freedom. With the general laws of the Empire they had little or nothing to do, save to meet their annual taxes. But the sumptuary laws imposed upon them regulated almost every item of household and even of personal economy. Every farmer was restricted in his expenditures by prescribed rules. So minute were these rules, that any but a literal transcription would fail to give an idea of the scope and extent of the paternal supervision of the homes of the Japanese people by the Government in the interests of economy.

The following are examples, first, of the rules applying to the *bungen* (station in life) of a farmer of seventy-five to one hundred *koku* ($375 to $500), and second, to that of a common farm-laborer:

1. For a Farmer of 100 *Koku*.

1. Such a farmer may build a house whose length is ten *ken* (about sixty feet), but there must be no parlor (*zashiki*), and

the roof must not be tiled. If the householder wishes to tile the roof, to protect it against fires, he must first get permission.

2. On the occasion of a marriage of a son or daughter, the gifts of the householder must be limited to the following:

Two *nagamochi* (a chest used for bedclothes).

One *tansu* (a chest of drawers).

One *tsuzura* (a vine used in basket making).

One *hasami-bako* (a case for scissors).

A *yuinō obi* (a present, usually the sash called *obi*, exchanged at the time of the wedding).

One *sensu* (a fan).

One *taru* (a vessel containing wine).

Surume (a kind of fish).

Kobu (a kind of seaweed).

Tai (a kind of fish, used on occasions of ceremony).

3. The viands on the wedding-day must be as follows:

(1) *Zōni-zuimono* (a kind of soup).

(2) The things placed on the *honzen* (a small table): (*a*) in the *hira* (one of the dishes), *namasu* (a kind of fish); (*b*) in the

choku (the other dish), something roasted or broiled.

(3) *Hikimono* (viands taken home by each guest): (*a*) *suimono* (soup), two kinds; (*b*) *torimono* (a liquid), two kinds; (*c*) *hikigashi* (a kind of cake). These three kinds altogether must not make more than a small amount.

4. The family must never wear silk clothes. If a son or a daughter is to marry a person whose station allows the use of silk, the householder must request him not to use it on the occasion of the wedding.

5. No guests should be invited other than relations of the family, *ko-bun* (people who are under obligations to the householder for kindness received, and stand in the place of children), and a few of the most intimate friends. But this rule refers only to the day of the wedding.

6. At a wedding or New Year's call, the use of *jū* (lacquer boxes, containing confectionery, given as presents) is forbidden.

7. When a member of the family makes a visit to a relation or elsewhere, he

should not carry valuable presents. When he is visiting a sick friend, he may take anything which happens to be at hand.

8. When there is death (*fukō*), and people come to the house on visits of condolence, no wine should be offered.

9. At a funeral (*butsuji*) wine should not be offered to the persons who follow to the grave.

10. On such occasions, the viands should be of five kinds only; but there should be no wine. If wine is offered, it should be given in soup-cups, not in wine-cups, nor should *tori-zakana* (a dish served only with wine) be prepared.

11. On the occasion of the birth of a first child (*Uizan*), the presents from the grandparents should be as follows only:

A cotton garment.

One set (four boxes) of *jū*.

One *taru*.

Viands.

From the other relations only small money-presents, if any, should be sent.

12. When the child is taken to the *mura* (village) temple (the occasion called

miya-mairi), *jū* may be offered to the grandparents, but not to others.

13. At the time of *hatsu-bina* (girls' festival), and *hatsu-nobori* (boys' festival), grandparents and other relations should not present *hina* and *nobori* (dolls and flags), the whole family should present a single *kami-nobori* (paper flag) and two *yari* (spears), and relatives may also make small money-presents.

2. For the *Bungen* of a Farm-laborer.

1. The house may be five and a half *ken* (about thirty-two feet) in length, and the roof should be of straw or bamboo thatch.

2. The presents at a wedding may be:

One *tsu zura* (a vine used in basket making).

Nagamochi (chests) are forbidden.

3. At entertainments, one *hira* (dish) and one soup may be offered, but not in cups.

4. The collar and sleeve ends of the clothes may be ornamented with silk, and an *obi* (belt) of silk or silk crêpe may be worn, but not in public.

5. Hair ornaments should consist of *norihiki* and *motoi*, and nothing more.

6. Footwear should be *narazōri* (sandals made at Nara) not *setta* (sandals of iron and leather). Women are to wear bamboo-thonged sandals ordinarily, but at occasions of ceremony sandals with cotton thongs; men should wear only bamboo-thonged sandals on all occasions.

7. At the time of *Uizan* (birth of first child) the grandparents may send two *jū* (set of confectionery boxes), and money for rice and fish; other relations should send only money for fish.

8. At the time of *hatsu-nobori*, the grandparents may present a *yari* (spear), and at the time of *hatsu-bina* a *kami-bina* (paper doll), or *tsuchi-ningyo* (earthen doll).

Accompanying these specific regulations, made with careful reference to each man's station in life, there were also general rules to meet unspecified contingencies. For example, only in case of absolute necessity could an umbrella be used by the ordinary laborer. He must usually content himself with the protection of a straw rain-coat. Another provision related to costly articles

which a family might happen to have. Special permission was necessary to make use of them, and no articles of luxury were to be used if on hand.

The minute particularity of these sumptuary laws is matched only by the naïve way in which they are justified, and their intent explained by the lawgivers, and both the rules and the reasons for them are peculiarly illustrative of the delightfully paternal attitude of the Government toward the people. Accompanying them is a rescript which runs as follows:

"These rules are not made to force families of one rank to be equally intimate with all others of the same rank, or to prevent a family from occupying a high rank merely because it is poor; but because, unless some such rules are laid down, families are very likely to be unable to live upon their means in the station they would like to occupy, and thus would come to grief. So that these *bungen* have been established, and rules carefully laid down. Still, the *kami-byakusho* (upper farmers) must not be arrogant with the *shimo-byakusho* (lower farmers), and the lower

farmers and laborers must not hate or dislike the former. *Shimo* should respect *kami*, and *kami* should treat *shimo* kindly. This is the natural law, established by Heaven, and it should be obeyed, not struggled against. The community will then be orderly and peaceful. . . . These rules are established in order that people may be frugal and economical."

Thus it was that the dynasty, which close sealed the Empire, faced and solved the tremendous problem which that seclusion involved.

The problem, as already stated, was this:

A population of twenty millions at the start, that number nearly doubling before the country was again thrown open, was to be subsisted solely upon the resources which the Empire itself could supply, with only one-twelfth of its area susceptible of cultivation. At the same time, in the face of the tendencies to the contrary which isolation is ordinarily sure to develop, the people were to preserve their self-respect and live in peace, happiness, and content with each other.

That the policies adopted to secure these seemingly impossible ends were successful, the condition of the people at the present time, when, after the centuries of seclusion, the barriers have been broken down and the feudal system abolished, is ample proof. These people are, indeed, wretchedly poor, but their occupation being held in high esteem, their access of pride is to them and to the nation more than compensation for their poverty; while the wonderful development of agriculture under the stimulus of that pride has made the arable twelfth of the Empire more than sufficient to support its teeming millions. And again, the pinching and searching economies enforced upon the masses, having become not only the law, but the fashion, even in the higher ranks of society, have resulted in that simplicity of living, and consequent freedom from superfluous cares, which have practically made the Japanese, in the best sense of the word, the most independent people of the world.

CHAPTER IV.

FEUDAL COMMERCE.

IN view of the fact that a majority of the people of the Western Republic are now seriously contemplating the policy of national seclusion, one of its two great political parties, from the point of view of the tariff, advocating industrial isolation, and the other, from the point of view of the currency, demanding in the name of patriotism a practical sundering of monetary relations with the rest of the world, some of the details of Japan's commercial methods and experience, after she so thoroughly and persistently carried out this purpose, ought to prove an interesting subject of study.

It is not that the interest lies in the possibility of the experiment being repeated at this late day. The world of trade is now too finely organized a nervous system for that, and even the mere suggestion of an attempt to repeat it entails quick dis-

organization and disaster. But the fact that it was once done, and that it was so successful as to last two and a half centuries; the fact that a great empire, taking advantage of its natural isolation, deliberately adopted the policy of intensifying that isolation; that it became an empire without foreign commerce, and yet in many ways highly prosperous; that it worked out in profound peace its own commercial problems, unvexed by foreign complications or foreign competitions, must arouse a measurable degree of curiosity as to the ways in which those problems were solved. Such curiosity is just now heightened also by Japan's recent and surprising advent in the fields of Occidental commerce, and by her evincing there such a spirit of enterprise, such an aptitude for trade, and such an intimate knowledge of the world's modern ways of doing business, as to make her a most formidable competitor of the leading commercial powers. It is the marvelous swiftness of her recent development along these lines, which, apart from the numerous other surprises which she has given the world, is now being

noted as the most astounding feature of her extraordinary modern career.

It is for this reason that a glimpse at her commercial methods and activities during her period of seclusion may not only prove to be of interest, but, possibly, also furnish some explanation of this otherwise inexplicable development.

The first consideration to be kept in mind in making such a survey is that Japan was and is an empire, and not a mere petty group of islands. Covering an area of about the extent of the entire range of the Atlantic States of the Union, and having over these the advantage of more than twice as long a coast line, and many times the number of good harbors, Japan, when it sealed those harbors to foreign trade, and shut out the commerce of the nations, shut in also a vast commerce of its own. It shut in great industries which stimulated inventive skill and ingenuity, and it shut in an army of merchants and traders, who, forced to make the utmost of comparatively restricted fields of industry and trade, developed under their limitations that aptitude for commercial life at which

the nations now are marveling. For this aptitude, like many another which the Japanese are exhibiting, is no sudden acquisition, nor is it a result merely of the industrial and political revolution through which they have recently passed. It is the outcome of a long and careful training in the business habits and methods of their own isolated commercial world; a world which, though restricted, was for the time amply large enough to put business capacity to the test, and to evolve a nation as able now to hold her own with the world, as she once so successfully held her own against it.

The really wonderful, and in many of its aspects the most inexplicable thing in the development of mercantile energy and business capacity among the Japanese, is that such development has been made under the most severe moral and social discouragements. In feudal times, while the occupation of agriculture was raised to the dignity of a profession, and every incentive given to enhance the self-respect of the farmer, the merchant was held at the bottom of the social scale.

None except the *eta*, or actual outcasts, were in such evil social repute. "As far back as history carries us, contempt for the business of mere money-making was a prominent characteristic of the Japanese people. There is hardly a tale of any length which does not furnish facts proving this. The merchant, the usurer, the middle men, were regarded as the pariahs of ancient Japanese society, to the level of whose life the noble samurai would rather die than descend."*

It is to be noted, also, that the popular feeling against the merchant had a deeper source than the contempt which we visit upon the *nouveau riche*. It was the business of making money, not the vulgarly ostentatious use of it when made, which was despised. In truth, for the display of wealth there was neither disposition nor incentive, so universal and so eminently fashionable were simplicity of living, and economy in expenditure.

In later feudal days, it is true, there were among the merchants and commercial houses, and there are to-day in increasing

* Transactions Asiatic Soc. of Japan, Vol. XIX. — 1 p. 23.

numbers, those who, by force of native probity and business capacity, have partially succeeded in overcoming the obloquy attached to their occupation. But the stigma has, nevertheless, entailed the natural and inevitable result. With some notable exceptions, mercantile life in Japan has heretofore attracted largely those to whom social repute is a minor consideration, and, of course, the nation in its commercial dealings has been seriously handicapped by the resultant character and reputation for honesty of its trading class.

This one consideration needs to be borne in mind in every fair estimate to be made of the honor and integrity of the people as a whole. It may also be a key to the explanation of the seemingly direct contradictions which exist in estimates already made.

The average Japanese servant, for example, and he is a fair representative of the so-called masses, is painfully honest. Even a foreign master of his could drop a coin on the floor at night with a moral certainty that he would find it in a conspicuous place on the table the next morning.

When, however, the servant in making purchases enters the rôle of a business agent, he seldom hesitates to take quietly the little commissions, which in the West are openly charged for such service. In this regard, lest his business instinct get the better of him, he needs watching. But in almost every other relation he can be thoroughly trusted. The children of samurai are most severely punished for even picking up lost articles in the street.

Among all classes there prevails an almost morbid sensitiveness as to any imputation upon one's honesty. And yet by the foreigners in the East, who have had extensive business dealings with the Japanese and the Chinese, it is the latter who are extolled as paragons of honor and probity, while to the former credit is given for mere smartness or worse. Even in Japan itself, it is the Chinese who are preferred to natives in filling positions of trust and responsibility in the foreign banks and great commercial houses at the open ports. The seeming contradictoriness of the moral situation is further increased by the admitted fact that, whereas in Japan

official corruption is almost unknown, the entire official class of China, as the conduct of the late war plainly showed, is made up of the most venal of spoilsmen. These marked incongruities find their complete explanation in the relative estimation in which in the two countries the soldier and the trader have been held.

In the Island Realm the soldier samurai, who now, with hardly an exception, fill the ranks of officialdom, from the Emperor's Ministers of State down to the humblest policeman, have ever been held in the highest honor, while the trader has been lowest in the social scale. In China, on the contrary, it is the trader who has been honored, and it is the soldier who has been contemned. In each land the inevitable has happened. These occupations, and the men engaged in them, have very naturally grown to be largely in accord with the estimate put upon them. In so far as the virtues ascribed to the Japanese soldier are his in truth, they are his because he has grown to the value placed upon him; and in so far as the complaints against the Japanese trader are well founded, they may

be directly traced to the popular disparagement of his profession.

While, however, the profession, as a whole, came under the social ban, there were still degrees of honor in which the various classes of traders were held. The distinction, for example, between wholesaler and retailer, or between the merchant princes and the minor tradesmen, was as marked as it is in the West to-day. And here again the difference in honor told upon the establishment and maintenance of mercantile probity. Among the commercial houses, which, as already mentioned, succeeded in overcoming the prejudice of society against money-making, was the celebrated House of Mitsui, the story of which, as told by Professor Wigmore, will perhaps, better than anything else, illustrate both the character and the magnitude of the commercial interests and operations of the secluded Empire.

"The House of Mitsui was founded early in the Seventeenth Century in Kyoto, by a man of that name, coming from Echigo Kuni in the West. Contradictory stories are told as to which of the family's

masters first brought it into prominence by his energy and skill. Romance has colored its early days; but at any rate, no long time elapsed before prosperity began to visit the house, and, after one or two generations, it found itself with branches extending to all parts of the country, the chief stores being six in number, one for each branch of the family. The house had taken the name of 'Echigo House' (*Echigo-ya*); and as early as the last decade of the Seventeenth Century its fame was such that Kämpfer was attracted by the extent of its commercial operations to make special mention of its achievements.

"The story of the success of the Echigo House seems to have been what is the story of commercial success everywhere: keenness to seize the opportunity, large operations and small profits, with thoroughness, honesty, and fair treatment of subordinates. One of the worst features of old Japanese trade was the excessive use of credit. No sales, except of the smallest retail amount, were made for cash, and naturally the sellers recouped themselves for bad debts by charging high prices.

The Echigo House in Suruga ward, Yedo, was one of the first to adopt the policy of cheap sales for cash (*gen-gin yasu-uri*). The shop soon became one of the most popular in the city, and was thronged with customers. It was sixty feet long, and two hundred and fifty feet deep, and there were forty clerks, each of whom had his own specialty, such as collar-silk, sleeve-silk, etc. An attractive feature of the shop (which is maintained to this day, as all foreigners can testify) was that the prices were fixed; there was no coming down (*kakene*) or bargaining; and this was appreciated even in a community where the bargaining habit prevailed.

"Beginning with the sale of cloth, they gradually enlarged their business and included other staples, and went outside the three emporiums of Osaka, Yedo, and Kyoto, to the various provincial towns. At a later period they had three shops in Yedo, employing about one thousand clerks. These were under six chief clerks (*banto*), who met half a dozen times a month to settle accounts, and discuss the policy of the house. On any day when

the sales of any of the shops reached two hundred ryo, congratulations were exchanged and the clerks were feasted. In the tenth month a general meeting was held, to which every employee came; and it is related that on these occasions fifty casks of wine were emptied, and the ducks for the soup alone cost one hundred ryo.

"Their masters of the six branches of the family served an apprenticeship in the shop like other clerks, and lived without ostentation. There was but a single capital stock for the whole of this extensive business, and the profit and loss of the concern was made on a single account, not separately for each branch; so that the house easily surmounted the vicissitudes of trade in any particular quarter.

"Late in the Seventeenth Century the house began to attract the attention of the Government. The town magistrate of Yedo brought the family master before the Council of State; and he was thenceforth enrolled among the Government merchants (*go-yo-tashi chonin*). These were rich houses who advanced money and furnished supplies to the Government, and they

naturally occupied the most influential position, and possessed special opportunities of increasing their wealth. In the early days of foreign settlement in Japan, when the Government was suspicious of the intentions of the foreigners, and wished to put the trade into responsible hands on the Japanese side, the Mitsui House was told to go to Yokohama and take charge. But the house did what every other conservative house had decided to do; it refused to go. Only after peremptory commands did it establish a branch in Yokohama. This reluctance of the respectable and solid business houses to take part in the trade with foreigners is at once a characteristic of old Japanese commercial life, and a key to much of the unfortunate misunderstanding, which has since given rise to a certain generalization on Japanese character peculiar to a class of foreign residents in Japan."*

Such testimony makes it clearly evident that neither the commercial life of the Empire, nor its character for probity,

* Transactions Asiatic Soc. of Japan, Vol. xx. — Supplement, p. 134.

suffered total collapse, because of the social stigma laid upon it.

That in spite of the stigma, and in spite also of the restricted field for trade, Japanese business life was active and intelligent to a degree which has marked no other Oriental people, and even to a degree which qualified the nation on the opening of the country to take its place at once by the side of the leading industrial and commercial nations of the West, may be proved by the same unimpeachable authority.

Since the Abbé Huc's discovery in China of all the chief rites, ceremonies, and regalia of the Roman Catholic Church, duplicated in the Buddhist temples and services, there has been no such curious and interesting find as that which has lately revealed the existence in secluded Japan of nearly every kind of commercial organization and device by which the modern business world of the West conducts and expedites its affairs, and which are commonly supposed to be exclusively the outcome of Western ingenuity, or of Western experience. The good Father Huc, in his

zeal to maintain the originality of his church, could find no other way of accounting for its double except to ascribe it to the instigation of the devil; the simple truth being that, as human nature is constituted, the same tendencies in it find, in widely separate lands, the same forms of expression. So in the independent invention by Japan, during her period of profound seclusion, of all the modern commercial conveniences and devices common in the West, is of itself ample evidence of the strength of her innate commercial instincts, and of her ability to compete with the Occident in business enterprise; while it also explains her recent seemingly sudden development along these lines as being simply the natural and normal outcome of her commercial past.

Summarizing the results of Professor Wigmore's indefatigable research along these lines, it is but fair to start with his own conservative statement of the character of these results. He says: "It is idle to contend that Japanese mercantile life of the last generation was equal in richness of development, complexity of opera-

tion, fertility of resource, or importance of undertakings, to the Western life of to-day, or even of the last generation. But we do not have to go very far back to reach a point where the comparison is not so unequal a one; and what we do find throughout is that Japanese commerce possessed, with scarcely an exception, the fundamental mercantile institutions and expedients with which Western commercial law deals. Europe and America have, for nearly two hundred years, had advantages which have been denied to Japan; notably, they have had the opportunity for a free exchange of the new ideas which each day brings forth, an opportunity through the lack of which Japan has suffered in almost every department of commerce, whatever it may have gained in art. But meanwhile, Japan has been in possession of these fundamental commercial notions, and, like the steward who turned his one talent into five, this country has preserved and developed these ideas to as high a degree as was possible under the circumstances."

The account of the great commercial

house of Mitsui, already given, should prepare us for the discovery of at least the germs of the powerful joint stock corporations ultimating in the overshadowing monopolies, which, in the West, while they are acknowledged as the creators of industrial development, are also feared as the coming tyrants and oppressors of the poor. The history of the growth and temporary abolition of these in Japan is, perhaps, the most interesting, as it certainly is the most instructive of the chapters in the nation's commercial experience. It is pointed out by the writer just quoted that the corporation idea, that of a business as an entity, as a legal person, is an idea inherent in the very foundation of Japanese society, the conception of the family, not the individual, as the social unit, logically opening the way for the conception of corporate action and responsibility. One need not, therefore, be unduly surprised to learn that, very early, business began to run into the corporate groove. Very suggestive of a leading characteristic of the nation, a bath being in its eyes of the very first necessity, is the fact that the earliest

legal document (1651), relating to a corporation, was one concerning the bath-house guild. In the Eighteenth Century, such guilds had become so common a feature of commercial life, that they controlled trade at fish-stands, rice-houses, silk-stands, and peddlers' stands. The business of money-changing became legally the exclusive right of a few about 1720, and, at the end of the century, the monopoly system was the basis of commerce, the opening of the present century seeing the establishment of some sixty guilds in Yedo, and a still larger number in Osaka.

Curiously enough, in the relations of these monopolies to each other, there was developed a striking parallelism to what has long been considered an exclusively American institution. The term "Big Four" we have deemed original with us. But Japan, for two centuries, was dominated by the "Big Ten," this being a combination of the trades having to do with the chief articles of commerce, such as cotton, dry goods, iron ware, etc. In fact, there were two "Big Tens," one in Yedo and the other in Osaka, which

coöperated with each other to control the entire trade between the two cities.

In 1841–2, a wave of popular dissatisfaction, similar to that now prevailing in the United States, swept over the land, resulting in a complete abolition of the trades' guilds which had so often resorted to cornering the markets that popular patience was exhausted. The result of this abolition is so exceedingly interesting and instructive just at the present juncture, that it is well to describe it in Prof. Wigmore's own words:

"The legislators soon found that the evil they had created was greater than the evil they had abolished. The guilds were gone, and their rigid control of trade was gone; but with this had disappeared, also, the very foundation of trade,—commercial confidence. The guilds had worked to build up their own interests, but they had also, in so doing, served the interests of general prosperity by establishing wholesome rules of commercial honor, by creating central tribunals enforcing commercial opinion, and by placing each and every branch of trade on the firm footing which

concerted action could not fail to give. When this framework of guilds was withdrawn, there was a melting away of the commercial structure. Mutual confidence disappeared; the value of the shares shrunk to nothing—a result which crippled every possessor, and destroyed at once the merchant, whose honesty had been his chief capital. It was no longer possible to borrow money on the shares, and there was a general contraction of business on all sides, which naturally had a disastrous effect on the producers, and ultimately on prices. The people (for the step seems to have been the result of popular clamor) found that, after all, they had not been so unfortunate when the guilds were flourishing; and, before ten years had passed, the elders of Yedo were laying before the Government a petition for the reëstablishment of the old order. It was conceded on all hands that the abolition measure had been a failure; and, in April, 1851, the guilds were reëstablished, not, however, with all their power to oppress the people. By means of certain well-advised restrictions, it was sought to retain all the influ-

ences for good which the guilds were capable of exerting, and, at the same time, to take away from them the power to restrain, by artificial modes, the natural courses of trade. The whole operation of abolition and restoration is one which would repay the further study of the economist."

Another of the remarkable developments of the Western commercial world has been that of the insurance system. Reference has been made already to the germ of such a system in Japan, as it grew out of the kindly influences of the neighborhood unions, prompting to mutual assistance in the event of disaster to any one or more of the members. The exceedingly small sum required to rehabilitate a family with a house and its belongings made such an insurance assessment easy of collection. Here, again, just as the family unit suggested corporations and guilds, so the neighborhood unit suggested the application of a like principle to the guarding of commercial ventures from loss. As the Japanese are credited with being measurably quick to take a hint,

one is not, therefore, surprised to learn that, among the ship owners and freighters of Osaka and Yedo, a regularly organized mutual system of marine insurance has been established for two hundred years or more. Connected with it was also an institution providing for a regular inspection, registry, and classification of vessels. It was a veritable Lloyd's, instituted when, to the Japanese, England was nothing but a name.

In the matter of the use of money as a medium of exchange, it might, perhaps, be thought that a country shut out from the rest of the world, would need nothing more than the tokens which could pass from hand to hand, and that there would be but very slight recourse to the various substitutes and expedients such as checks and bills of exchange, which the distance between countries and the time consumed in transport have compelled the modern commercial world to adopt. But Japan, far from being an exception in this regard, may even claim priority in such inventions, born as they were of the necessities of the situation. For it is to be considered,

that owing to the peculiar nature of the country, which is scarcely else than a mass of mountains, the question of distances between its parts was comparatively as vital as it now is between lands divided by oceans and continents.

The time occupied in transit or transport was a controlling factor in the life of trade. Even the water communications, made available by the fact that the Empire was a group of islands, and by the enormous length of the coast line, were excessively slow. With the unseaworthy junks to which the mercantile marine was rigidly restricted (a Government measure to prevent emigration), a voyage between ports of the Empire might be more of an undertaking than is now the circumnavigation of the globe. For example, for the round trip between Osaka and Niigata, two cities separated from each other by a distance of only eight hundred miles, the allowance of time was a full year. There was, therefore, just as pressing need in Japan as in other lands of those supplementary media of exchange which now so wonderfully facilitate commerce between

distant places, and utilize credit during the long periods of transit. In fact, this necessity was early recognized and met, as appears not only from the actual use of all such expedients as the bill of exchange, check, and bill of lading, even while all foreign trade was prohibited, but also from clear evidence of the priority of such inventions over the present leading commercial nations of the world. Not only were these so-called modern and Western devices found in Japan when the country was opened, but there they have been for two centuries, original and independent creations out of the necessities of her once secluded commercial life.

"The guild of the bankers," says Professor Wigmore, "was organized in Osaka, about 1660; the only European districts having, at that time, a real banking system being the commercial towns of Italy. These banks in Japan lacked none of the essential features of our own. They received on deposit, honored checks, issued notes, negotiated bills of exchange, and discounted bills drawn against merchandise. . . . They supported each other

in times of financial embarrassment. They had some sort of a clearing-house system, the details of which are not yet clear. In short, there is little in the Western idea of a bank which the Japanese institution did not have, or could not easily have assimilated."

The earliest mention of the use of checks in Europe is in the latter part of the Seventeenth Century. The Japanese had already then been using them for fifty years. They had also introduced the strengthening feature of sometimes requiring them to be "certified." The same system of endorsement also prevailed as with us. The rule was likewise enforced between banks that faulty checks must be returned before twelve o'clock.

In the same century in which bills of exchange were first employed in Europe (the thirteenth), there are, in Japanese legal records, rules for the regulation of their use in commercial transactions.

Still another extraordinary duplication of what is usually deemed a peculiarly Western and modern outcome of business life may well be thought beyond belief.

The nerve centre of the commercial world, the stock exchange, is so largely the creation of modern conditions, and its sensitiveness is so greatly increased by the swiftness with which the slightest touch upon any part of the world is communicated to it, that it might be deemed the very last thing one would expect to find in tranquil, secluded, old Japan, whose very people themselves to this day seem well-nigh devoid of anything resembling nerves. Yet there it is, and there it was even when only the germs of it existed in the fevered Western world.

Visiting the Rice Exchange in Tokyo in 1890, the year of famine, when the market was subject to wide and sudden fluctuations, it was easy to imagine myself in the New York Stock Exchange, on the occasion of a flurry in Wall Street. There was the same seeming madness and tumult, and the vociferations, in Japanese, of the brokers were not a whit more unintelligible than the clamor of a like mob in the Western city. "With what marvelous quickness," I said to my interpreter, "you Japanese have succeeded in reproducing

every feature of the New York Stock Exchange." "New York!" he exclaimed, "why, this very thing has been going on here in Japan for two hundred years." In fact, not only is no feature of the familiar Western scene absent, but all the minor and irregular accompaniments which have grown out of the system with us find their counterparts long antedating them there. Strenuous efforts of the Government to put a stop to dealings in futures have been as ineffectual as the more modern essays in that direction in the West, and as for bucket-shops, it may possibly be surmised that in the century-old institution of the kind in connection with rice sales in Japan, the Americans found the name which they have wrongly been given the credit of inventing.

Again, we of the West are given to pluming ourselves over our success in practically bringing that most fickle of all things, the weather, under the domain of law, so as to be able to read its signs in the interest of our business affairs. We say we could never have done this except for the continental knowledge of weather

conditions furnished by the use of the telegraph. The power of prevision we have thus gained by our glance over immense areas of space, the Japanese very early attained by observations which covered centuries of time. Through these observations they had learned that the rice-crop was beyond the limit of danger from weather conditions on the two hundred and twentieth day of their year, and that, for the preceding ten days, nothing but the typhoons, at that season prevalent, could injure it. This interval of ten days was, therefore, a period of extreme nervous tension in the Exchange. The weather forecast of each day was eagerly scanned, as it was recorded in the "sky book," and every speculator's house was transformed into an observatory for watching the indications. The fluctuations of the extraordinary barometer then in use * played so

* This barometer was made by "hanging balanced quantities of earth (*to*) and charcoal (*tan*) in small nets from opposite ends of a bamboo pole, working on a fulcrum. They knew that on the approach of stormy weather earth becomes damp and heavy, while on a dry and clear day it yields its moisture abundantly. The advent of a weather change in either direction was

great a part in rice speculation, that its name was given to the traffic itself. It was called the *totan-sho*, or "earth and charcoal traffic."

It would seem, from this glance at Japan's business methods when shut out from the world, as also from the magnitude of the internal trade which these methods plainly indicate, that marvelous as has been her recent industrial and commercial growth, it is no sudden or unaccountable phenomenon any more than is the change wrought in her political system. The latter transformation, as is now well known to every student of her history, astonishingly abrupt as it seemed at the time, and still almost universally deemed by foreigners to be owing to Western pressure, was no revolution at all, nor was the advent of Perry's Black Ships aught but the occasion, not the cause, of the outward transmutation thereafter accomplished. Like every seemingly sudden transition in history, it was preceded by a

announced by a disturbance of equilibrium in the home-made barometer." — Transactions Asiatic Soc. of Japan, Vol. xx. – Supplement, p. 201.

period of unseen preparation, the steps of which can now be readily traced. During all the long years of seclusion, the lofty patriotism and intense ambition of the island race were chafing under the self-imposed bonds and limitations of the Empire's life; and the movement toward a new order of things, as a recent Japanese writer has remarked, may be said to have begun with the Tokugawa *régime* itself, that is, not with the opening but with the closing of the gates to foreign intercourse. What we have been witnessing in this extraordinary transformation scene was not a break in the nation's life, but simply a natural reaction consequent upon the opening up of a field for the exercise of long repressed aptitudes and aspirations.

On precisely the same basis, and in the self-same way, is it possible to account for the enormous strides which the Empire is now taking in the fields of industrial and commercial enterprise. These islanders are plainly no novices in the great modern game. With an intimate knowledge as well as constant practice of modern busi-

ness methods, in many particulars long antedating such knowledge and practice in the West, their recent expansion along these lines is but the perfectly legitimate outcome of the unnatural contraction under which the native business capacity of the people has so long labored, and, however great and sudden it may appear to us, the change is not a revolution but an evolution.

In fact, in view of the peculiar character of the Empire's past, no phenomenon of its late industrial or commercial progress can be deemed abnormal.

Here, for example, was an island people, presumably animated by that spirit of restless daring and enterprise which close contact with the sea and its alluring perils always imparts, and yet they have been for centuries denied the boundless field which the vast surrounding oceans offered for the exercise of that spirit. A nation of sailors was prohibited from venturing to sea. To such a nation, the opening of its ports was not merely or chiefly for the influx of foreign trade. It was more largely for the outflow of native enter-

JAPANESE JUNK

prise. It but furnished the occasion for the putting forth of long pent-up energies. No progress, therefore, on these lines, however greatly it may astonish us, can now be regarded as aught but normal and natural.

Forty years ago the Japanese knew nothing but the small, unwieldy, and unseaworthy junks, to the use of which, along their coasts, commerce was rigidly limited, in order to prevent the escape from the country of any subject of the realm. To-day the fleets of the *Nippon Yusen Kwaisha* (Japan Mail Steamship Company) practically command the coast trade of Eastern Asia, while its lines are now rapidly being extended and multiplied, not only across the Pacific to the ports of the Western States, but also to Europe, Australia, New York, and South America. Not only in the number and character of its vessels, many of them the best the works on the Clyde can produce, does this immense corporation rank high among the leading steamship companies of the world; its affairs are also managed and, with hardly an exception, its ships are officered

and manned by natives alone. In the growth and development of this one house, even had it no native rivals, which is by no means the case, Japan has already attained a leading place among the commercial nations of the world.

The impulse given to Japan's internal industries is also evidence to the same point. Here was an ingenious and busy people restricted for centuries to a home market for the product of such industries, and able to subsist upon the returns from such a market, only by the practice of the most careful and pinching economies. Now, the marvelous expansion of these industries is almost beyond belief. During the eleven years previous to 1893, the number of factories had increased by 1,384 per cent.; steam-power by 2,226 per cent., and horse-power by 2,134 per cent. In the cotton-spinning industry, the rate of increase in the number of spindles during nine years has been 1,014 per cent.; in the production of woven fabrics during eleven years, 2,415 per cent., and in that of cotton yarns, 18,230 per cent.* More

* Japan Weekly Mail, Dec. 7, 1895.

extraordinary yet is the development of industries since the close of the late war with China. In that war, Japan despatched nearly 300,000 men across a wide ocean, and spent more than 150,000,000 yen, without borrowing a single sen from any foreign source, without the smallest depreciation of her credit, and without disturbance to her industries and commerce. And when the war ceased, those industries advanced by leaps and bounds beyond all precedent. The simple realization on the part of the Japanese that they had at last gained their place in the family of nations, and that the world's markets would now be more than ever open to their products, has wrought, as if by magic, upon the enlargement of their industrial activities. During the single year of 1895, nearly 340,000,000 yen (silver dollars) were invested in new or extensions of old enterprises; while in the forty-one days from Dec. 26, 1895, to Feb. 10, 1896, nearly 150,000,000 yen were put into projects undertaken during a period only slightly longer than the first month of the current year.*

* Japan Weekly Mail, Feb. 29, 1896.

For the Japanese, the reaction from the joys and privileges of their enforced participation in an exclusively home-market is manifestly intense enough to indicate the severity of the century-long repression under which their industries languished.

Again, as another illustration of the strength of the rebound, we find in Japan a people with so strong a native aptitude for trading that not even the social stigma cast on the business of money-making, nor the restricted field in which it might alone be carried on, could wholly repress it. Most curious and interesting are the ways in which this aptitude asserts itself, in spite of the limitations to which it has been subject. The striking of bargains for gain having been made disreputable, trading as a game, or rather as a contest of wits, has always been a popular amusement. Let a foreigner to-day start a dicker with a Japanese shopman, and the constantly increasing throng of bystanders will look on with intense interest, not so much in the hope that their countryman will win, as with curiosity to see which

will triumph in the contest of wits, every instance of bargaining having come to be regarded as such. Even, therefore, while money-making has been under the social ban, the perceptions of a by no means dull-witted people have been constantly sharpened by it. Now a larger and freer field for the enjoyment of their favorite game, with the added stimulus of personal gain, has been opened to them. If in this field Western tradesmen have expected to find the Japanese mere innocents and children, it is more than probable that they have already realized their mistake. The land was, indeed, fast sealed for centuries, and during those centuries Western business life had far larger opportunities for development. But the Japanese, with a native aptitude for trade, had also, in their seclusion, a training of their own, and that training has evolved a race of men who, in the modern commercial contest of wits, will be likely to hold their own.

Just now, as was intimated in the beginning of this chapter, there seems to be in progress such a contest between Japan

and the United States, a contest upon so gigantic a scale, and involving so many of the fundamental conditions of modern commercial prosperity, that the rest of the world may well regard it with the most intense curiosity and interest.

It is certainly a notable fact, that, during the very period in which Japan has been opening her Empire to the world, spreading her commerce over the seas, assiduously seeking for her products foreign markets, and striving for relations of closest amity with nations once contemned by her as barbarians, the Great Republic of the West has been steadfastly pursuing on parallel lines a policy of retrogression, and, so far as modern conditions will permit, of practical seclusion. Its legislation has accomplished the destruction of its mercantile marine, and the extinction of the American sailor, almost as effectually as that of *Iyemitsu* in the beginning of the Seventeenth Century, put an end to the seagoing enterprise and nautical skill of the Island Empire of the Pacific. Trusting to the extent of its own territory, and cultivating habits of extravagance

rather than those of economy among its own people, it seeks prosperity only from trade within its own borders and through the lavish over-production of its own industries. And at the same time with all this isolating sentiment of self-sufficiency, there is rapidly growing in some sections of the country an anti-foreign spirit which bids fair to become as bitter and undiscriminating as that which so completely separated the old-time hospitable Japan from the sympathies of the world. This may seem a harsh indictment of one's own country, but in the present access of national vainglory, it is fully justified by the facts. Whether this spirit of pseudo-independence will reach its *reductio ad absurdum*, whether a day will come when foreign fleets will appear at our gates with the demand that our ports be opened to the world, is happily not in question. The situation, even now, is so impossible, that the delusions which have brought it about must needs be but transitory. And it may be that this vision of the solid prosperity and marvelous commercial progress of Japan, while she is fol-

lowing precisely the opposite course, will prove a powerful influence, leading us to reverse our present self-isolating policy, and to take again our rightful and honored place among the family of nations.

CHAPTER V.

THE JAPANESE OUTCAST.

IN a land where, whatever may be the drawbacks to a pleasurable existence, as Occidentals count pleasure, the atmosphere of kindliness in which one dwells more than compensates for them all; in a land where even the inculcated hatred of foreigners, stimulated by the Government through nearly three centuries of isolation, could not eradicate the native hospitality of the people, the question may arise whether there is any limit to the spirit of good-fellowship which seems always and everywhere to prevail; whether there is now or was, in the old feudal days of neighborhood amity, any class outside the pale of the friendly sympathies of this good-humored race.

That poverty, however abject, had of itself no power to render a man an outcast in the eyes of the Japanese, is evident from the fact already adduced, that not

only was no social stigma attached to it, but it was to a certain degree made positively fashionable by the passion for economy which prevailed throughout the Empire among all classes. Indeed, poverty being universal, so far as any outward display of wealth might indicate the contrary, was commonly regarded as the normal condition of life, and it therefore entailed no loss of respect. Then, too, simplicity of living being enjoined upon all, and of sheer necessity practised by the vast majority, there must have been a noticeable reduction of those envyings and jealousies which ordinarily embitter the relations of the different classes of society. Therefore it may safely be said, that no Japanese ever became an outcast solely because of his poverty. The condition of the poor, even at this day when Western sentiment with reference to their station in society may be supposed to have gained some influence in the Empire, testifies to their thoroughly respectable and self-respecting character. Even the largest cities in Japan are slumless. An Englishman, who had spent the most of his life

in sanitary work in the vilest quarters of Liverpool, expressed a desire, when a guest of mine, to visit corresponding localities in Tokyo, that he might make an intelligent comparison between the two cities, in the special lines on which he had been working. Our preparation for the expedition was, in itself, significant of what we were likely to find. Having ascertained what locality was regarded as the very worst in the city, the next question was as to what means we should take to provide for our safety on the expedition, such a trip in a Western city generally involving the necessity of being accompanied by a policeman. The Japanese smile, immortalized by Hearn, was at its broadest on the face of our interpreter as we suggested the precaution, and the sole escort assigned us by our native friends, who were anxious to do everything for the success of our trip, was an intelligent newspaper reporter, familiar with every nook of the great city. As we wended our way through the streets to our destination, another unwonted feature of a slumming expedition impressed itself

upon us. Although we were passing from the best part of the city to the worst, to all outward appearance there were no stages of transition. We did not even know when we had arrived. There was not only no sudden descent from heaven to hell, such as may be found, for example, on the northern slope of Boston's Beacon Hill, but also there was no mark of gradual deterioration in the aspect of things. This was largely due to the almost universal observance by the Japanese of Arthur Helps' motto for domestic architects, "Never mind the outside." No one in that land, whether of high or low degree, seems to care for the exterior appearance of his dwelling, and, as for its front, perhaps that is purposely made so exceptionally shabby and dingy as it almost always is, in order to enhance the charm of the paradise upon which its rear opens. At least that seems the only way of accounting for the absolute indifference of all Japanese to the putting of the best foot foremost. The result is that gray monotony of dinginess which impresses the traveller, in the aspect of

every city, town, and village of the Empire.

So it was that we arrived at our destination without knowing it. Nor indeed, when the "slums" were reached, did they show any of the usual signs of their existence. Innumerable tokens of poverty there were, poverty indeed such as can hardly enter the imagination of a dweller in the West, so meagre even among the comparatively well-to-do are what are deemed the necessaries of life in frugal Japan. But while there was poverty there was neither abjectness nor misery. There were thin, hollow-eyed, gaunt, and shrivelled women; there were stolid and sad-eyed men. But there were no evil faces, no wolfish eyes, no signs of those fierce passions which in our Western cities can be curbed only by the strong and ever-present arm of the law. Best of all, there were no pallid, bloodless children. Even the lowest dens of Japanese poverty were a section of the children's paradise. For there, as everywhere in the Empire, whatever might be the depths of want into which the parents had been cast, the chil-

dren must still be kept rosy, chubby, and happy. At all events, certain it is that rosy, chubby, and happy without exception, seemed all the children whom we saw in the so-called slums of Tokyo. In fine, our expedition was a thorough disappointment, for not only were there none of the distinctive features which we shudderingly associate with the name, but also there were no materials for any sort of a comparison such as my friend desired to make. There were simply evidences of a degree of poverty somewhat more marked than that to be found in the rural districts of the country.

But though we found no slums such as we had looked for, there was much in the depths of the poverty revealed which was of surpassing interest. A marked feature was the atmosphere of respectability which pervaded every home, as evidenced by some touch of that æsthetic feeling in which every Japanese is a sharer. Though the houses were hovels in different stages of dilapidation, yet just as with the homes of the well-to-do, however shabby the front, there was, in the penetralia, some

WISTERIA AT KAMEIDO TOKIO.

bit of garden or well cared for plant, or some kakemono or written device, or at least some little corner of the den kept with scrupulous neatness, showing the persistent survival of what is best in the Japanese nature. If there was no room for a garden, one would be made in miniature in an earthen bowl or other receptacle, every conventional feature of the pleasure-fields of the rich being reproduced, sometimes on a surface of a foot or less in diameter.

The mention of room or want of room for a garden suggests what seems to us of the West the absurd inference that the dwellings of these victims of the most abject poverty were in some sense homes, and not mere herding places. Such an inference is more than justified by the facts. Even in the old feudal days, according to Dr. Simmons' notes, a marked feature of the common people's life was that "each family had its own independent roof; whether poor and humble, or large and commodious, the dwelling was occupied by but one family."

In the persistence of this extraordinary

feature of poverty-stricken life in the densely populated modern Japanese cities, we strike upon one of the chief causes for the absence from these cities of many of the more hideous characteristics of city slums.

There are and can be, literally, no herding places in Japan. The horror of tenement-houses is not only there unknown, but, thanks to the prevalence of earthquakes, it is simply impossible. Perhaps, indeed, it is safe to say that although in the course of a century the victims of Japan's constantly quivering earth may number their myriads, that same propensity of the ground, by reason of the insurmountable conditions it has imposed upon the construction of dwellings, has made more than full compensation in the salvation of hundreds of thousands from the moral and physical destruction which would otherwise have been wrought by the tenement-house system. And when to this kindly ministry of the earth is added that of the air, there being no problem of ventilation to contend with anywhere throughout the length and breadth of the Empire, it

becomes comparatively easy to account for the relatively idyllic slums of Japan's great cities.

However this may be, certain it is that poverty, no matter how dismal or abject, has not yet succeeded in lowering the poor to anything approaching that stage of demoralization and obloquy which in the Western world so often makes them outcasts from society.

Of the estimation in which criminals are held by the Japanese, and of the question whether they may not be looked upon as outside the pale of the people's sympathy, little need be said except that in Japan, as in other civilized countries, there are, of course, kinds and degrees of offences against the law, and that therefore, in this regard, the usual popular discrimination may be looked for. There is this, however, to be noted: namely, that the island people are preëminently a law-abiding people, and therefore, on general principles, some decided loss of caste is very sure to follow conviction of offences against the majesty of the Government. I was once told by Minister Irwin, of the

Hawaiian Islands, that when there was a population there of about three thousand Japanese, in the course of two years only three of them were brought before the courts on criminal charges. Of these, one was acquitted and one other adjudged insane.

In a community where respect for the law is as potent as such a fact would indicate, it is wholly reasonable to suppose that somewhat more than the usual social stigma would rest upon the offender against it. If there be a specially intense or bitter prejudice against any one class of such offenders, it is, perhaps, that felt against the common thief. You may call a Japanese a liar, and he will very likely show no resentment whatever; simply because, just as is measurably the case with us, falsehood is a recognized part of the system of politeness; but call him a thief, and you make him your lifelong enemy. According to the ancient caste distinctions, the actor was given a place on the very lowest verge of society, and yet the story is told that when the valuable wardrobe of one of the chiefs of

that profession was stolen, and recovered by the most persistent efforts of the police, he announced that he could never again wear what the touch of a thief had defiled.

With regard to another phase of social ostracism, the attitude of Japanese society toward those who in the Western world are called lost in a peculiar sense, has become of late a topic for interesting discussion. The fact that it is possible (there being rare cases now and then) for an inmate of the Yoshiwara, after her stipulated term of service, to return to something like a respectable and respected life and to contract honorable marriage, has been adduced as strong evidence of the moral obliquity of the Japanese on a matter which vitally effects the very constitution of society and of the home. Of this it may be said that aside from the question which might be raised as to whether somewhat rare exceptions should be made to serve as a rule, and aside, also, from the suggestion that in such cases the attitude of Japanese society seems to resemble in some degree that of the founder of the Christian religion,

that attitude finds its chief explanation and defence in the Japanese hierarchy of virtues, the arrangement of which differs greatly from that of the West.

The worst social outcast in their eyes is the one who breaks not the seventh but the fifth commandment. With them not chastity but obedience, especially in the family relations, is the very highest virtue; and simply because it is known and recognized that many an inmate of the Yoshiwara is there solely because of her spirit of self-devotion to the welfare or support of her family, or in obedience to parental command, there is no sweeping judgment of society against her as a hopeless outcast. Miss Bacon, in her admirable book on "Japanese Women and Girls," has stated the situation in a way which leaves nothing further to be said.

"Our maidens, as they grow to womanhood, are taught that anything is better than personal dishonor, and their maidenly instincts side with the teaching. With us, a virtuous woman does not mean a brave, an unselfish, or self-sacrificing woman, but means simply one who keeps herself from

personal dishonor. Chastity is the supreme virtue for a woman; all other virtues are secondary compared with it. This is our point of view, and the whole perspective is arranged with that virtue in the foreground. Dismiss this for a moment, and consider the moral training of the Japanese maiden. From earliest youth until she reaches maturity, she is constantly taught that obedience and loyalty are the supreme virtues, which must be preserved even at the sacrifice of all other and lesser virtues. She is told that for the good of father or husband she must be willing to meet any danger, endure any dishonor, perpetrate any crime, give up any treasure. She must consider that nothing belonging solely to herself is of any importance compared with the good of her master, her family, or her country. Place this thought of obedience and loyalty, to the point of self-abnegation, in the foreground, and your perspective is altered, the other virtues occupying places of varying importance. . . . From a close study of the characters of many Japanese women and girls, I am quite convinced that few women

in any country do their duty, as they see it, more nobly, more single-mindedly, and more satisfactorily to those about them, than the women of Japan. . . . Conscience seems as active, though often in a different manner, as the old-fashioned New England conscience, transmitted through the bluest of Puritan blood. And when a duty has once been recognized as such, no timidity or mortification or fear of ridicule will prevent the performance of it." *

From this essential departure from Occidental ideas in regard to the order of the virtues, it would appear that no just estimate either of the character of the Japanese courtesan herself, or of the morality of the supposed attitude of Japanese society toward her, can be formed without taking into account this popular exaltation of loyalty as the supreme virtue. On the one hand it makes it very probable that the proportion of those who enter the life from compulsion, rather than from choice, is relatively far larger than is the case in the West. Mr. Henry Norman in his

* "Japanese Girls and Women" — pp. 217–219.

chapter on the Yoshiwara* even goes so far as to say that of the inmates "there is not one case in hundreds where they are not unwilling and unhappy victims."

If anything like this be the truth, then, granted the possibility, there is, in a far greater degree than in the West, a probability of emergence from the life with the moral character untouched. That Japanese society in some instances recognizes this possibility, even so far as to restore to a position of comparative honor one who in its regard had exemplified the highest virtue of the national character, is certainly to its credit rather than to its dishonor.

On the other hand it is not for a moment to be imagined that the courtesan's life is any less despised, either by herself or by Japanese public opinion, than it is in any modern Western nation professing a regard for morality. There, as elsewhere the world over, her calling leaves upon her its own ineradicable stain, and the lowering of her personal dignity entails upon her its own irrecoverable loss. That stain and that loss, in spite of any

* The Real Japan — p. 294.

outward standing she may regain, are felt by herself as keenly and recognized by society as fully as anywhere on earth. Of her own thought of her calling, the story of Kimiko told by Hearn in his latest volume * bears touching evidence, and Norman supplements it by saying that, "when a girl leaves her Kashi-zashiki to be married or to make any attempt to live differently, nothing would induce her to take with her a scrap of the clothing she has worn there, an article of the furniture of her room, or even one of her knick-knacks from it, although she has paid for them all ten times over." It is needless to add that the repulsion she herself feels must be shared in a great degree by the society to which she is restored, and that, though no longer in any strict sense an outcast, she must live in her new world as one not wholly of it.

So much has been said in the preceding chapter of the merchant in feudal society, and of the disdain in which his occupation was held, that it may be wondered whether there could be in Japanese estimation a

* "Kokoro" — p. 307.

lower deep than that of trade. The institution of slavery might have furnished it, but of that, be it said to the honor of the nation, there is no trace for centuries past. That it once existed, however, may be inferred from the presence in the Empire of large numbers of veritable outcasts, a people beyond the pale of even that neighborly sympathy which has won for Japan the name of the preeminently kindly and hospitable nation of the earth.

Just what was the cause of the intense repulsion and contempt with which the Japanese have regarded the *eta* class is unknown. Possibly the prejudice is so virulent for the very reason that its origin is lost in the mists of antiquity. Its intensity must needs make up for the lack of any known or reasonable motive for it. For certain it is that no pariah class of any nation has ever been under a greater ban of disdain and contempt than have the *eta* of Japan. Herded in separate villages, the very existence of their communities was ignored. Any portion of the highway passing by their habitations was

left out of all road measurements. In all enumerations of the population they were omitted from the count except to be numbered among the cattle. Only in remote districts, where they could conceal their origin, could they obtain employment as common laborers, and then only at the risk of being slain, the marks of their class, impressed by centuries of ill-treatment, being easily recognized. Even to become a courtesan, one must in similar way conceal her past. The spot where an *eta* had been standing must be sprinkled with salt if a Japanese would tread there without contamination. Such thorough outcasts were they that they were not even permitted to worship the gods. None but the most degrading tasks were assigned them, such as that of crucifying and burying criminals, and slaughtering and skinning cattle. Of such occupations they were given the exclusive rights, in the possession of which some families grew rich, as wealth is counted in Japan, thus bearing in addition to their other burdens the reproach of being monopolists.

It may be that in the nature of these occupations we can find, as has often been surmised, not so much the outcome as the origin of the contempt in which the *eta* were held, the Buddhist teaching in regard to the taking of life causing those engaged in such work to be looked upon with horror. This, however, would by no means explain the excessive virulence of the Japanese prejudice when compared with that prevailing on the same score in other Buddhist lands. It is far more probable that the exceptional fierceness of their disdain has its source in some ancient affront to the people's intense sentiment of patriotism, some long-forgotten hurt to the Empire, of which the only remaining trace is this undying hatred, now become a national instinct.

Hearn, in his description of a visit to a settlement of outcasts, called the *Hachiya*, in Matsué, mentions the fact that "they are said to be descendants of the family and retainers of *Taira-no-Masakado-Heishino*, the only man in Japan who ever seriously conspired to seize the imperial throne by armed force." Other scraps

of tradition making the *eta* to have been originally captives from the Great Armada, the Tartar invaders, who dreamed of conquering the sacred realm, would also seem to justify some such way of accounting for this otherwise inexplicable and unnatural hatred.

Against the dark background of the inexpressibly harsh treatment of these outcast people by the otherwise kindly islanders, some features of their life, and even of their relations with their revilers, stand in shining contrast.

While the Japanese claim that the *eta* are of a different race from themselves, not even the utter degradation to which the outcasts were doomed seems to have prevented them from retaining and cultivating some of the leading Japanese virtues. In their case, for instance, even complete social ostracism did not lower their self-respect so far as to make them less regardful of cleanliness than their persecutors. Hearn, in the visit just mentioned, instead of encountering ugliness and filth, found "a multitude of neat dwellings, with pretty gardens around

them, and pictures on the walls of the rooms." A large public bath-house and laundry, also, showed that the instinct for personal cleanliness had survived through all the centuries of their degradation. Entering one of their homes, he found there some drawings by a celebrated artist which he was glad to purchase. Being entertained by the singing of some of their favorite ballads, he observed that, while their language was a special and curious dialect, the songs, which were peculiar to their class, were in pure Japanese, their inability to read or write making this a remarkable, if not a wholly exceptional instance, of the preservation from corruption of a purely oral literature.

This may indeed have been an exceptional community of pariahs, but the survival of any degree of self-respect in even one company of human beings subjected, as they and their ancestors have been, to age-long contumely with all conceivable scorns and indignities visited upon them, reveals the possession of moral stamina such as has seldom been credited to human nature.

There were also some alleviations to their bitter lot. In feudal days the chivalric training of the samurai bore fruit in many a manifestation of kindliness on their part toward these forsaken and despised beings.

While the common people seem never to have abated a jot of their hatred toward the *eta*, the knighthood of Japan often rose above popular prejudice so far as to accord them even more than a degree of consideration or of recognition as human beings. Japanese romance indeed has for one of its most prominent themes the heart struggles of the knight and the outcast maiden in their loves.

Possibly they who were trained in the school of chivalry owed the exceptionally kindly spirit they showed toward the pariah class to the consciousness that it often included many of their own rank, who for various causes had descended to the lowest depths of social outlawry. There was indeed a class of outcasts called *hinin* (not men), which was recruited from many sources, even from the samurai. According to Dr. Simmons, "the oppro-

brium attached to it, not arising from any hereditary occupation, was due chiefly to the shameless, dishonored character of the men who entered it. The recruits from the samurai would be men who had disgraced the name of the family, and who had not the courage to commit hara-kiri." Then, too, the knight who had the courage to marry an *eta* maiden must descend to her rank, and himself become accursed. It may have been that this formed, in a way, the bond of kinship which caused the samurai to be to the poor outcasts the sole exemplars of the spirit of human kindliness.

That their exceptionally generous treatment of the *eta* had, besides, a deeper source in their chivalric training itself, and that that training in Japan, as in Europe, simply bore its fruit of genuine courage and courtesy, is evidenced by the manly way in which some of the knights of Japan have stemmed the tide of popular prejudice since the pariahs have become citizens. By an imperial decree in 1871 nearly a million of Japan's accursed were no longer to be accounted as cattle

but as human beings, with rights and privileges like those of all the people of the realm. President Lincoln's proclamation emancipated more, but not from more misery nor from more degraded and degrading conditions of existence. Yet not even the imperial edict, potent as it is in Japan, could avail to temper, to any appreciable extent, the age-long prejudice which still darkens the lot of these poor outcasts. It is in the battle by the modern knight of the Empire, against this yet virulent hatred, that the chivalric virtues in which he was reared shine with their old-time radiance. As related by Black, a single instance of the kind of strife in which the true chivalry of Japan are now engaged will show the spirit which animates it, the odds against which it is fighting, and the power which inheres in its influence and example.

Among the privileges granted to the *eta* by the Emperor's edict of 1871, was that of public education. As in our Southern States, so in Japan, after the conferring of all civil rights there were enormous practical difficulties in the way of actually ob-

taining such rights. In the village of Koromi, certain men subscribed to establish a school. On the day appointed for its opening not one child appeared. The founders of the school, the men who provided the building and paid the schoolmaster, were *etas*. But there was one scholar who presented himself. Miyoshi (the governor of the district) foresaw the objections that would be felt. He went, therefore, and entered himself as a pupil, and actually slept at the house of one of the subscribers the night before the school opened. At first it was a mere matter of astonishment to the people; but, when they saw that he was really in earnest, and that he remained with the *etas* without feeling contaminated, a revulsion of opinion took place, and the school prospered.

It may be long indeed before the *eta* children will be happy in the public schools, in which they have equal rights with others. The victims of a prejudice so ancient that its very origin was forgotten centuries ago, cannot recover in a year or in a generation from the effects of the age-long obloquy which their race has suf-

fered. But with the self-respect which they seem to have shared in common with all the island people, and with the best of that people trained to knightly service in their behalf, there are none in the Empire who have greater cause for gratitude in the change which has passed over it than the poor outcasts of Japan.

CHAPTER VI.

A PATRIOTIC CULT.

IT is seldom that a civilized people is found with a religion of its own, the prevailing faith of almost every great nation being an exotic, having little or no connection with the springs of national life. The one notable exception is, of course, that of the Hebrews, with whom religious faith and the national consciousness were so closely identified as to be practically indistinguishable.

In Hebrew literature it is often difficult to tell whether the writer is speaking of God, or of the Commonwealth; of heaven, or of Jerusalem; of the Messiah, or of the nation itself. Religion being thus kept under the glamour of a sublime patriotism, Jewish history has become a record of patient loyalty unsurpassed in the annals of the world. Bereft of home, without a foot of land she can call her own, her

people scattered to the four winds, persecuted and abhorred of men, Israel still believes and proclaims herself the chosen nation, and holds fast her integrity as a distinct and marvellously homogeneous people.

The one other pre-eminently patriotic cult is to be found in the religion of Japan, in that ancient Shintō faith which, through all the vicissitudes of the nation's life, and despite the utmost efforts of foreign propagandists to dislodge or supplant it, remains to-day, not only the real religion, but the loyal heart of the land unifying the nation as could no other influence.

To the question, What is the religion of Japan? there can be but one answer. Foreign faiths are in that land only as guests. They belong not to the nation's life. Many Japanese are Buddhists, some are Confucianists, Christianity claims a few; but all are of the national faith, and Shintō is not only the religion of the State, but of the heart and life of every subject of the Island Empire. Religious faith and the national consciousness are with them as indissoluble as with the Hebrew.

SHINTO PRIEST.

Yet, closely alike as are the two peoples in their identification of religion and patriotism, their fates have been strangely different. The one, with every semblance of temporal empire vanished, dominates, by means of her religion, the chief civilizations of the world; while the other, her religious faith scarcely known, even by name, now looms upon the political horizon as one of the greatest powers of the earth.

Yet, though little known, the ancient Shintō religion merits attention, not only as a singularly patriotic cult, not only as the unique example of the persistence of a primitive faith among a highly civilized people, but also as a faith presenting features and tendencies diametrically opposite to those exhibited in our Western civilization. Here religious institutions continue, to all outward seeming, in full force and vigor, while at the same time an almost universal plaint is raised that the heart and life have gone out of them. There, amid the deserted shrines of the nation's ancient worship, and with scarcely any outward evidence of the prevalence of the primitive faith, the essence of that faith is still the

most vitally effective force which can be found in the life of any nation. Its theological traditions are openly and hopelessly discredited; its worship, where it still exists, is acknowledged to be the merest ceremonialism; but its heart is yet the heart of the nation, the source and spring of its unswerving loyalty. "The secret living force of Shintō to-day means something much more profound than tradition or worship or ceremonialism. It signifies character in the higher sense, — courage, courtesy, honor, and above all things loyalty. The spirit of Shintō is the spirit of filial piety, the zest of duty, the readiness to surrender life for a principle without a thought of wherefore. It is religion, but religion transformed into hereditary moral impulse, religion transmuted into ethical instinct. It is the whole emotional life of the race, the soul of Japan." *

Doubtless much of the fervor of patriotic loyalty in the Japanese nature may be attributed to the nation's long experience of isolation. Living within itself, and in a land so strangely beautiful that the early

* Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan, page 388.

worship of nature, which formed a chief feature of Shintō, might easily develop into a passionate pride of country, there has been much in the peculiar conditions of Japanese life to foster the national spirit. But it is also largely owing to the singular genius of the faith itself that patriotism has become the absorbing passion of the people.

Not the least among the influences contributing to this end is the extraordinarily unifying spirit of the Shintō religion. It is a fact as curious as it is interesting and significant, that it is a faith containing none of the elements of religion which commonly breed contention. Indeed, so conspicuously absent from it are the usual provocatives of religious rancor that it is commonly denied the name of a religion. There is in it nothing whatsoever over which it is possible to quarrel. It has no system of dogmas, no semblance of creed, no infallible book, no idols, no separate priesthood, no moral code, no promise of heaven, no threat of hell. As a natural result, religious wars have been practically unknown in the history of the Empire; and the most sympathetic and respectful hospitality toward other faiths has

been the habitual attitude of the Japanese mind. Propagandists of alien creeds have always, in the first instance, been met with welcoming courtesy. Only when suspicion has been aroused that the spread of their tenets or their ulterior designs might menace the integrity of the nation have the fires of persecution been kindled. It is safe to say that the Japanese sword, so quick to leap from the scabbard at the least hint of danger to the State, has never been drawn against any man simply because of his religious opinions.

This negative aspect of Shintō, the absence from it of all the usual provocatives of contention, while contributing largely to the unity of the nation, finds also a partial explanation in the region of patriotic sentiment. The lack of any code of morals, for example, is naïvely accounted for by native writers on the ground that the innate perfection of Japanese humanity as loyal subjects of the Son of Heaven enables them to dispense with any other specific moral guidance. Ethically, as well as politically, the Mikado is looked upon as supreme. Loyalty to him is the all-comprehensive

duty; and it is only the peoples who do not acknowledge his authority who need an ethical code.

If what Shintō is not has been thus largely instrumental in stimulating the patriotic spirit and in unifying the nation, still more in its positive aspects has the early cult contributed to the strength of the great national passion.

Innumerable have been the attempts of modern students to define and set forth the positive contents of Shintō, the latest being those of Dr. Griffis,* who endeavors to fix upon it unduly the stigma of phallicism, and of Percival Lowell, who would identify with hypnotism some of the modern phenomena connected with its observance.† These speculations, however, with many others, are merely the outcome of excursions into the fascinating realm of mystery which surrounds an early cult kept alive, as this has been, by a nation's peculiar experience of isolation.

The salient features of the faith, upon which all investigators agree, are nature-

* Religions of Japan.

† Occult Japan.

worship, and reverence for the dead. Than these, it may be said, no other influences could be adduced better calculated to inspire and strengthen love and loyalty to such a land as that of Japan, among a people so susceptible to beauty as are the Japanese.

It would be strange indeed if the features of a country so marvellously favored by nature did not inspire a religious reverence which, in its turn, might easily beget a well-nigh idolatrous love of the land itself.

Japan, to begin with, is a group of islands; and even were not their aspect so romantically beautiful, even had not their shores been for centuries so jealously guarded from intrusion, we know there is something in the very fact of isolation to inspire patriotic affection. Switzerland, guarded by its mountain ranges, and England, separated from Europe by the broad channel, have been pre-eminently the lands where love of country has become an intensity of passion. Now given a group of islands far away in the vast Pacific, extending through the most favored Northern latitudes, with a range of climate like that from Labrador to

Florida, the larger isles almost continental in their dimensions, the smaller often visions of romantic beauty beyond the dreams of fairyland; given mountain ranges and peaks combining every element of grandeur and loveliness; given a land first torn and twisted by earthquake and volcano into the wildest and wierdest forms which Nature can invent, and then every crag and ravine and valley and cliff and shore clothed with luxuriant verdure by the moisture-laden winds from all quarters of heaven, and it would become impossible to dream of such a land without being inspired with reverence for the nature which has so shaped and adorned it. Then place in it a race endowed with a keen susceptibility to natural beauty, and it would be strange, indeed, if that nature-worship, with which all human reverence has begun, did not develop into the most passionate ardor of patriotism the world has ever seen.

One of the most frequent objects to attract the eye of the traveller in Japan, is the torii, or sacred gateway. Its construction, whether it be of wood, stone, or metal, is ever the same, — two columns,

slightly inclined toward each other, supporting a horizontal crossbeam with widely projecting ends, and beneath this another beam with its ends fitted into the columns; the whole forming a singularly graceful construction, well illustrating the way in which the Japanese produce the best effects with the simplest means. This sacred entrance arches the path wherever, in Japan, the foot approaches hallowed ground. It differs, however, from all consecrated portals of other lands, in that it does not necessarily indicate the nearness of a temple. You may find it everywhere in your wanderings over hill and dale, at the entrance to mountain paths, or deep in the recesses of the woods. Sometimes it is on the edge of an oasis of shrubbery in the broad expanse of the rice fields; sometimes on the bank of a lake; and sometimes in front of cliff or cavern on the shore of the ocean. Pass under its arch and follow the path it indicates and, it may be only a few steps or it may be after a long walk or climb, you are led sometimes, indeed, to a temple, but oftener to a simple shrine. In the shrine you will find — nothing. But close by you

will see some reason for its being there placed. There is a twisted pine, or a grove of stately trees, or a fantastically shaped rock, some suggestion of Nature's wildness or loveliness. The shrines are built, not for idols, but to consecrate the beauty in the midst of which they are placed. And further, it often happens that following the path under a torii, you look in vain for either temple or shrine. The path ends in that which to the Japanese heart is more sacred than either; it leads to some spot where, in the magnificent panorama spread out before him, he can gaze on the beauty or the grandeur of his country. Here is the true shrine of his religion. Wherever he can stand and behold the land of his birth, there is the temple of his faith.

Yet were this all of Shintō, — the love of country inspired in the heart of every Japanese by the charm of his environment and by his own susceptibility to the influences of beauty; were his national religion only nature-worship in a soul delicately sensitive to nature's attractions, — there had been nothing in it to save Japan from the fate which befell Greece. Like the

country between whose life and her own so many a suggestive parallel may be drawn, Japan might have sunk into the depths of effeminacy and degeneration had she followed only the leadings of her nature-worship, had her religion been merely æsthetic, had there not been also in her national faith a virile element which kept her braced for heroic service in the realm of loyal devotion. Such an inspiring factor Shintō possessed. Lacking in all the features usually associated with religion, with no system of philosophy, of metaphysics, or of dogmas; with neither idols nor priesthoods, nor sacred books, nor code of morals, nor visions of future judgment; it had, nevertheless, beside its simple nature-worship, a mighty stimulus to duty, an efficient fashioner of sturdy character, which has kept the fires of patriotism alive unto this day in the nation's soul. In its ever loyal devotion to the memory and example of the dead, in the so-called ancestor-worship, which in Japan has reached a higher stage in its development than anywhere else in history, there is, when joined with nature-worship in such a land, the sufficient ex-

planation of the intensity of that national spirit which has characterized the whole life of the Empire. Susceptibility to the influences of beauty in a marvellously beautiful land might well arouse an ardent love of country and, for a time, a passionate readiness to die for it. It might easily, as in Greece, inspire the moral heroism which has made the names of Thermopylae and Marathon immortal. But far more is needed to keep alive in a nation the virile virtues, as the event has often proved. Greece, once illustrating the sublimest heroism, is now peopled by a posterity who stereotype moral imbecility; while the Oriental nation, whose affinities to her are so strangely marked, has emerged from centuries of seclusion and peace, a nation of strong men, not only with no taint of effeminacy upon them, but with as fervent and strenuous an ardor of devotion to country as ever of old.

In the reverence paid to the dead, in the sentiment and practice of filial piety which was its natural outcome, and in the instinct of obedience which that reverence fostered, we find the secret of the miracle of human

energy which Japan has wrought to-day in the sight of an astonished world.

In the late war with China every soldier of the invading army was nerved to duty and devotion not only by the knowledge that the entire nation of forty millions was behind him, that not a single dissenting or disloyal voice was raised in opposition to the struggle, but also by the consciousness that another vaster but viewless host was with him. "Little Japan," as the Occidentals commiseratingly called her, when she engaged in the struggle with her giant antagonist, is no weakling when this arm of power, given by her national faith, is reckoned among her resources. The Japanese are ever surrounded and inspired by their dead. It is not simply, as in other nations, that traditions of the knightly deeds, and visions of the knightly chivalry of the past, linger in the memory of the warrior. The very actors in the fierce struggles of old are themselves on the field and in the thick of the fray, urging their sons to victory. Emperors, princes, chieftains, knights, all the heroes of his country's annals, and all the loved and revered of his own household,

now become divine, are witnesses of the soldier's valor.

Nor is this the only arm of power given to Japan by its national faith. Out of this same reverence for the dead, which is given to the living also as they grow old, has come that discipline of obedience which has made the nation a vast family of law-loving and law-abiding people, and its army so magnificent and so efficient a machine. Accustomed from earliest years to implicit and unquestioning obedience to the elders of the household, the youth who fight to-day the battles of Japan have had centuries of training in that virtue which makes the iron soldier and the loyal patriot. With that virtue, and with the superb discipline which it makes possible, must every enemy of the Island Empire reckon, in taking into account its resources. Vast as are the physical powers which a nation of forty millions may exert, they are as nothing to the viewless energies generated by the national faith. Fostered by nature-worship, there is the intense love of a land worthy to be loved; and, strengthened by centuries of training in filial piety, there is a spirit of

deathless loyalty to the living and the dead who people its homes. Devoid, as it is, of all the conventional features of religion, Shintō has thus the essentials of a true faith in its power to create a mighty sentiment of the heart, and to sound a call to faithfulness in life.

In love of country and in loyalty to it the Japanese are at one. Made homogeneous to a degree by the influences of their long seclusion, the faith which they shared with the early Greeks and Romans, but which they alone among civilized peoples have perpetuated and developed, has moulded their life into a unity such as no other nation has approached. With but one thought and one desire, — the glory and honor of the Empire — there is in Japan but one genuine religion, — the national faith of Shintō. Its reality "lives not in books, nor in rites, nor in commandments, but in the national heart, of which it is the highest emotional religious expression, immortal and ever young. Far underlying all the surface crop of quaint superstitions and artless myths and fantastic magic, there thrills a mighty spiritual force, — the

whole soul of a race with all its impulses and powers and intuitions. He who would know what Shintō is must learn to know that mysterious soul in which the sense of beauty and the power of art and the fire of heroism and the magnetism of loyalty and the emotion of faith have become inherent, immanent, unconscious, instinctive." *

* Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan, page 209.

CHAPTER VII.

RELIGIOUS INVASIONS.

NEXT to the pride felt by every Japanese in the antiquity of the Imperial Dynasty, the oldest in the world, is that engendered by the fact that, during all the twenty-five hundred years of its rule, "unbroken from ages eternal," never has the foot of an invader pressed the soil of the realm. For this the nation is, of course, largely indebted to the rampart of the ocean waves. The enforced political seclusion which became its unique privilege for two and a half centuries, and which was so successful in barring out the vices and strifes of Western civilization, has been scarcely more of a boon to the Empire than its natural isolation far out in the Pacific, rendering effective invasion by a hostile force well-nigh impossible. It has been a boon to the cause of humanity as well, for, in the case of a people so peculiarly constituted, endowed as they

are with such an intense fervor of patriotism, it is impossible to think of Japan conquered without thinking of a whole race annihilated. Few Japanese would survive, or would for a moment care to survive, the loss of their country, and even its temporary subjection to a foreign foe would evoke such an unconquerable spirit of revenge as would embitter the very nature of a now sweet-tempered and amiable people. It is not uncommon to-day for a Japanese to slay himself as the best means of calling public attention to his fear of some danger threatening the Empire. Such a death occurred not long ago, induced by the conviction that the nation might thus be warned against encroachments by the Russians. Purely morbid this, one might say, but, if it is a disease, it is one infecting the entire body of the people, and it is a factor in the means of national defence which will have to be taken into account by any Western Power contemplating invasion of the Island Empire. The tidings of the landing of a hostile force on its shores would transform the land into one vast camp, and its men into

a body of iron soldiery. With all the immunity from attack which England has enjoyed because of her insular position, enhanced by the wider seas which separate Japan from the main, the England of the Pacific has for a defence a rampart of national pride to the strength of which even her Western prototype has as yet furnished no parallel. To stimulate such pride, if stimulus were needed, Japan has also in her annals the story of her triumph over an Invincible Armada, sent against her in the year 1281 by the mighty Kublai Khan, the Mongol conqueror of Asia. To complete the parallelism, the destruction of the enormous fleet of thirty-five hundred ships was brought about by the same power as that which annihilated the Spanish Armada. The Japanese never tire of telling how the Shinto gods of Isé, in response to the prayers of the entire nation, raised the mighty tempest which overwhelmed in utter ruin the invading Mongol host. Little may indeed now be left of the superstition which in this instance ascribed to the gods the salvation of the land, but there is still in the Japanese heart a deathless faith in

the sacredness of a soil, and in the integrity of an empire, whose protection seems divinely guaranteed not only by one of the mightiest forces of nature, but also by one of the loftiest sentiments which can nerve the spirit of man.

And yet Japan, despite the immunity from attack which she has always enjoyed, has been again and again subject to invasion by one power whose influence, though never for a moment supplanting the ancient national faith, has profoundly modified the intellectual life and social conditions of the land.

As has already been said, there are few countries which have not been subdued by the propagandists of some foreign religious faith, and in one sense Japan has been no exception to the rule. In fact, her spirit of open-hearted hospitality has ever invited invasion from this source. The manner of her subjection, however, the fact that the various foreign religions which from time to time have exercised their sway within her borders have changed in no essential regard the national faith, enables Japan to hold her unique place as the unconquer-

able nation in the history of religious strife, as she has held it in her age-long exemption from physical attack. In other lands conquered by alien faiths, the ancient cults have either wholly disappeared or have become so profoundly modified as to be practically unrecognizable. But in Japan almost the reverse has happened. There has been no genuine conversion there except that of the would-be converter, and, at the best, in the lapse of time the invading faiths have become scarcely more than adjuncts or supplements to the ancient and only living religion of the Empire, to that passionate admiration of their beautiful land, and to that devoted reverence for the dead who have made it famous, which alone have power to arouse aught akin to religious enthusiasm in the Japanese breast.

It is safe to say that in becoming a Buddhist or a Confucian no Japanese has ceased to be a Shintoist, for to him that word is only another name for the love of his native land, and to abjure Shinto would be an act of treachery to the imperial realm. Wholly true, therefore, is it that,

while Japan has been again and again invaded by foreign religions, never once has it been conquered by them. Welcomed with open-hearted hospitality as have been the teachers of alien creeds, except in a single instance when such hospitality was flagrantly abused, they have been permitted to remain, and to work for the nation's good side by side with those of the indigenous faith; but that faith has never been superseded, nor has allegiance to it wavered. No substantial victory over the realm has ever been won even by the all-conquering religious zealot. In Russia you may see both the Cross and the Crescent on the same church spire, but the cross is always above the crescent to signify its victory over it. In Japan Shinto and Buddhist temples may be found side by side with the same priest officiating in both.

There is no field there for religious propagandists who do not recognize to the full the claims of that native faith, whose watchword is loyalty to the land, or who are not willing to assimilate to it their own faith. It was thus that Confucianism

entered the land, in no spirit of conquest or zeal for conversion, but as the bearer of somewhat that could be welcomed for the nation's good. It supplied the needed code of morals which Shinto lacked, and gave added sanction to that reverence for the aged and the dead upon which the native faith was already based. Of a kindred spirit, coming more as a learning than as a militant faith, it was cordially welcomed, and found for three centuries a congenial home. During its sway — for over the minds of the scholars of the realm it acquired a remarkable ascendency — the national faith, still existing in its integrity, although losing many of the superstitious accretions which had grown around it, shared with the new teaching the reverence of the nation, the Confucian temple side by side with the Shinto shrine bearing witness to the close friendship of the two faiths.

In a like spirit, and in similar guise, though with far more of the animus of propagandist zeal, came, in the fifth century of our era, the forces of Buddhism. In this case, also, the islanders, with their

BOATMAN IN RAIN COAT.

usual power of keen discrimination, seemed at once to recognize elements which might well be utilized to supply the deficiencies in the native faith and worship. Shinto was a religion without a body of dogma. Buddhism came with an elaborate dogmatic system, and supplied the need. The Shinto ritual was bare and barren. The new religion rivalling the Roman Church in the ornateness of its temple service, and in the splendor of its decorative embellishments, gave new impetus and direction to the æsthetic life of the nation. It found, too, a congenial home among people of a race which has everywhere responded to the efforts of Buddhist propagandism, that religion having been welcomed and adopted by the Turanian races alone, almost as conspicuously as Christian missionary success has been confined to the peoples of the Aryan family.

And yet, in spite of all these favoring influences to ensure a hospitable greeting and a permanent ascendency over Japanese thought and life, and further, notwithstanding the fact that the large majority of the Japanese are to-day pro-

fessing the Buddhist faith, it is very doubtful whether even this invasion of the land by an alien creed can be reckoned a successful one. As Dr. Griffis says, "the thing that has suffered reversion is the exotic rather than the native plant." Buddhism is indeed everywhere in evidence as the faith of the common people, but in their worship and in their creed they have probably never for a moment thought that they were abjuring the old religion of the land. In fact, the only way by which Buddhism could gain even its nominal ascendency was by incorporating into its pantheon all the Shinto gods, and by representing the new faith as only another form of that which had so long possessed the heart of the nation.

The deities whom the Japanese had always reverenced were given new names; the festivals in which they delighted were rebaptized as Buddhist saint's days; and in such guise the alien faith was offered to the people. The hospitality with which the Buddhist missionaries were welcomed was repaid in kind; the alien religion was practically surrendered by them to all the

assimilating influences which Japanese patriotism could suggest or bring to bear; and so, with the heart and life of Shinto yet untouched, the faith of Gautama gained its nominal victory. Profoundly influencing in many regards the national character; giving new direction to the æsthetic life of the people; presenting fresh sanctions to morality; and adding many a picturesque feature to popular customs; Buddhism itself underwent a far greater transformation. It was the propagandist force, and not the people against whom it was sent, which became converted. Japan experienced no change of heart, even when all favoring influences combined to aid the converting power. Never surely was there a religious invasion of a land essayed with greater prospect of success. But even with all the advantages of a hospitable reception, its centuries of occupation, its Oriental origin, and its racial congeniality, it wrought in vain.

It brought to Japan a creed and philosophy of pessimism; for fourteen centuries it was granted every facility for teaching pessimism; and yet the Japan-

ese are still the most sunny-hearted and genial optimists to be found anywhere on the globe. It brought its pictures of heaven and hell; and in the fourteen centuries during which they have been displayed, it is safe to say that few Japanese have been known to refer to them without a smile. It preached a gospel of gentleness and peace; and for the two hundred and fifty years of the seclusion of the Empire political peace lent its aid in behalf of this gospel; and yet Japan is to-day as ever in the past a nation of warriors, untouched by effeminacy, and beneath its mild aspect smoulders all the fierceness of the old feudal days. It had every possible opportunity to permeate the Japanese life with its spirit; but *Yamato damashii*, "the Soul of Japan," remains in all essential regards the same chivalrous, indomitable, patriotic soul which Shinto reared and nourished of old. There is no Japanese whose real religious faith is not summed up in the idea of loyalty to his land; none whose genuine religious enthusiasm is evoked by aught save its welfare and its glory; none whose highest conception of

religious duty is not that of dying for the Emperor.

Nor did the next force sent against the land by propagandist zeal, welcomed as it was with true Japanese hospitality, and given every facility for its task, accomplish any lasting results. The Jesuit Missions of the Sixteenth Century owed their extraordinary initial success to two principal causes. Their leaders following the example of their Buddhist predecessors, instead of antagonizing the existing religions, in a great degree disarmed opposition by presenting the new faith as only another form of that to which the people had already been accustomed. Just as the Buddhist had included in his own pantheon the Shinto gods, so the Jesuit, finding that the Buddhist ritual and imagery would lend themselves most readily to his purpose; seeing for example that the Japanese Kwannon, the goddess of mercy, would require only a change of name to serve as the Virgin Mary, made as few radical changes in the old faith as possible, and thus gained what seemed a firm foothold on the religious soil of the

Empire. With a far-seeing wisdom, also, the newcomers appealed to the very passion of loyalty which formed so vital an element in the ancient faith, and, again imitating their predecessors in the missionary field, directed their initial efforts to the conversion of the rulers of the land, knowing that to gain them would surely be to gain their following also. Mr. Kaneko, formerly Professor of Japanese History in the Imperial University and now a Vice-Minister of State, is my authority for the statement that no religion ever acquired influence in the Empire unless it first appealed to the highest in authority, and won them to its cause. It was to this end that the early Confucian teachers and the Buddhist proselytizers directed all their initial efforts, and so won their following. Twenty centuries of training in the school of loyalty is a factor in the missionary situation in Japan which no missionary except the Protestant Christian has ever overlooked. The latter, content to quote irrelevantly the text "the common people heard Him gladly," has failed to utilize the primal element of the Japanese nature,

its devoted and unquestioning loyalty. How thoroughly the Sixteenth Century Jesuit availed himself of this mighty aid, is evidenced by the heroic constancy with which the Catholic converts among the common people faced the fierce persecution which swept the Western religion from the land. That they knew very little of the doctrines of the church for which they endured such hideous tortures, and in whose cause they went to death in droves, seems evident from the impossibility of there having been any adequate means of communication between the great body of converts and their foreign teachers.

The barrier of the language was in itself enough to prevent a knowledge of the tenets of a faith sufficient to awaken the least enthusiasm for it, much less to inspire a passion for martyrdom in its behalf. Nor is there wanting direct testimony to support this conclusion. As quoted by Hildreth, "So late as 1690 there were, according to Kämpfer, fifty persons imprisoned in Nagasaki for life, or until they should renounce the Catholic faith. These were peasants who knew little more

of the faith which they professed except the name of the Saviour and the Virgin Mary, which, indeed, according to the Dutch accounts, was all that the greater part of the Japanese converts had ever known."

The only rational explanation, therefore, for the marvelous constancy of the hundreds of thousands of Japanese martyrs for the Roman faith, is to be found in their sentiment of loyalty unto the princes and lords who had early given to it their adhesion.

Of the outlook for the modern successors of the Jesuits, the intelligent and self-denying emissaries of the Roman Church who constitute the invading force in the Empire to-day, little can be said except that their present movement on Japan is made in the face of almost insurmountable obstacles. The disastrous ruin which overwhelmed the enterprise of three hundred years ago, the popular execration in which, during the whole of that interval, the Catholic name has been held, and the breach of loyalty to the Empire which seems involved in acknowledging fealty to

a Western pontiff, combine to create in the minds of both leaders and people almost as great a distrust of the Roman ecclesiastic as of the Russian politician. The old suspicion that the religious ascendency of Rome might lead to political subjection, the suspicion which once transformed a tolerant and hospitable people into a nation of relentlessly cruel persecutors, is still alive and active. There has been no slightest change of the Japanese heart in this regard.

And yet, in spite of being handicapped in these many ways, the Roman Catholic forces, though only one-eighth as large as the present Protestant army of invasion, count fully as many followers as the latter, each of the two great branches of the Christian Church in 1894 claiming about 50,000 converts.

As to the probability of the complete surrender of the Empire to either of these two rival forces, or to both of them combined, it will be readily seen that, as the above estimate represents the total result of more than thirty years' effort, a very distant date must be set for the conversion

of the remaining thirty-nine million nine hundred thousand. True it is, indeed, that a computation from the initial rate of increase in such an Empire as this does not take into account the possibility of a wave of religious sentiment sweeping over the land and changing the allegiance of the entire people. But such a mighty movement in favor of any form of Christianity, or of all forms combined, is not likely to happen in Japan. The time for it has passed, and it is doubtful if the opportunity will ever again recur.

The significant fact in the later religious history of the Empire is this, that at the time of the opening of the country thirty years ago, Japan was ready and eager to adopt any Western institution or ideas which could aid in building up her new civilization, and she sent commissions to investigate the educational, military, naval, judicial, and industrial systems of Europe and America. Among the commissions was one to inquire into the expediency of adopting Christianity as the State religion in order to improve the moral condition of the people. "The result," as says Hearn,

"confirmed the impartial verdict of Kämpfer in the Seventeenth Century upon the ethics of the Japanese. 'They profess a great respect and veneration for the gods and worship them in various ways. And I think I may affirm that in the practice of virtue, in purity of life and outward devotion they far outdo the Christians.'" The commission reported against the adoption of the Western religion on the ground that, judging from the moral condition of the West, Christianity was not there so potent an influence for right living as were in Japan the religions which had so long held sway among the island people. In considering the question of missionary success in Japan, therefore, this is the salient point to be kept in mind. During the last thirty years in every other department of thought and life that Empire has been the scene of one of the mightiest revolutions ever known in the history of the world. From the benefits of this movement which bore so many features of Western life across the Pacific, Christianity has been the one thing excluded — and it was deliberately excluded be-

cause, after full investigation, it was deemed prejudicial to the interests of morality. Had it been possible for those in authority to come to any other conclusion in regard to it, the instinct of loyalty in the minds of the masses, instead of wielding its tremendous power against the efforts of the missionaries, would have been their potent ally, and the nominal Christianization of the land might ere now have been effected in a degree proportioned to its transformation in other regards. But as it is, the foreign zealots must work against hopeless odds, and must continue to content themselves with gains which do not even keep pace with the natural increase of the population.

In a broad view of the missionary situation the odds are indeed hopeless. The army of invasion is confronted, primarily, with the fact that in all history successful religious propagandism has always been confined within racial limits. An examination of the map of the world at once makes it plain that, of the three great missionary religions, Christianity is to be found in force to-day nowhere outside of

the Aryan family, that Buddhism, with the exception of small districts in the land of its birth, has found favor only among the Turanians, and that Mohammedanism, apart from its conquest of a portion of India by the sword, is now at home only within Semitic confines. There are, therefore, no precedents on which to build the hope of any genuine conversion of a Turanian race to Christianity.

Again, as Hearn has so clearly pointed out, "never within modern history has Christendom been able to force the acceptance of its dogmas upon a people able to maintain any hope of national existence. The nominal successes of missions among a few savage tribes or the vanishing Maori races only prove the rule." And the hope of a national existence, the dream of national glory, the mighty stimulus of patriotic pride, the passion of loyalty, this is the very breath of life to every faithful subject of the Island Realm. There was a time, when confronted suddenly with the vision of the overwhelming forces which could be brought to bear against her by the Western powers, Japan

realized her own weakness, and for many years, in view of the fate of other Oriental peoples, the hope of her continued national existence might well be clouded.

That was the day when it might have been possible for Christianity to gain ascendency within her borders. But that day has passed, and in the hour of her own marvelous achievements in the present struggle for existence among nations, as she proudly takes her place among the powers of the modern world, there is scarcely any other people in whose veins the pulses of national life beat so full and strong. Even in the little Christian fold which remains as the result of thirty years of mission work, this national spirit is making itself felt in such force as to put in serious jeopardy the whole outcome of that long and arduous effort. Not only is there among the converts already made an insistent demand that the property and management of the missions shall be placed in their own hands, and the services of foreign workers be largely dispensed with, but there are also manifest signs of a determination

View of Matsushima.

that the doctrinal developments of Japanese Christianity shall accord with the Japanese spirit and be conformed to the traditions, customs, and essential faiths of the nation's life. It is an open secret that the American commission recently sent to Japan to consider the crisis in mission work there was confronted with problems which the national spirit has evoked, not only in matters of administration, but also in those affecting supposed essentials of Christian belief. It is at least wholly safe to predict that every hope of sectarian aggrandizement on Japanese soil which has been cherished by any of the numberless denominations who have sent their propagandist forces there is doomed to disappointment.

The Christianity which gains a foothold or any lasting influence in the Empire will be neither Presbyterian, nor Episcopalian, nor Baptist, nor Methodist, nor Unitarian Christianity. It will not be even American, nor English, nor German, nor Roman Christianity. It will be, if anything at all, an essentially Japanese faith based upon and assimilated with the

old loyalties. What has happened in every other department of the nation's life, the dismissal of foreign teachers and employees just as soon as natives have been educated to take their places, is the manifest destiny of the foreign religious propagandist. The Japanese will, as always, give him a patient and hospitable hearing, with a view to ascertain whether what he has to offer will be of use to the nation's life. If it shall be found to be of service in enhancing the power of that life, the office of administering it and of moulding its future developments will be directed by native influences, and the self-appointed foreign directors of the nation's religious and moral well-being will find their occupation gone. And thus the only invasion of the Empire which ever had a hope of success will prove a failure. In her faith, as in her polity, Japan will remain, as always in the past, the unconquered Island Realm.

It is not that her people are not profoundly grateful for the admirable educational, benevolent, and philanthropic work which the missionaries have done for them

in the thirty or more years of their occupation of the land. Doubtless they would have been far more grateful had they not clearly seen that it was done not primarily for its own sake but for the ulterior purpose of sectarian aggrandizement; but many of the results accomplished have been so plainly for the bettering of the moral and social conditions of the Empire, that they must be a churlish people indeed who would not appreciate the devotion which has inspired and the energy which has wrought so much of good in their behalf. But, on the other hand, it must be said that in a large view it is a question whether such obligation be not cancelled by the breaking down of the old moral sanctions of the nation through the inconsiderate zeal of the alien host to destroy what they are pleased to call idolatry. It may well be doubted indeed whether the addition of any number of hospitals, asylums, colleges, and churches could compensate for the evil results of the denunciation by the missionaries of that ancestral worship which lies at the foundation of Japanese morality; which

forms so lovely a feature of their domestic life; and which has been the direct source, not only of much of the sweetness and charm, but also of the virile qualities with which the Islanders have so recently astonished the world. The outcome of that simple, natural, and beautiful domestic worship, no more deserving the stigma of idolatry than the Western custom of laying flowers upon the grave or than the impulse which has filled Westminster Abbey with the forms of England's great dead, has practically been to furnish Japan with that moral code which her religion has been said to lack. We have only to put ourselves in her place, and try to imagine the feelings with which we would greet the messengers of a powerful alien organization, denouncing and seeking to destroy the Decalogue, to form some adequate conception of the essential hopelessness of the present assault upon the national faith of Japan.

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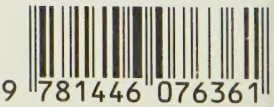

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